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M. AT THE FOOT OF THE BEL-TREE AT DAKSHINESWAR

GOSPEL OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

(According to M., a son of the Lord and disciple)

VOL. II



Second Edition

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

THE present volume, like its predecessor, is translated from the diary of a disciple which was printed and published originally in Bengali. In the preparation of the translation, we have assumed the readers' acquaintance with the previous volume, and have therefore refrained from explaining many references to places and persons which are contained therein. A few repetitions, will be found here and there; such repetitions however, are unavoidable in what is but a record of actual conversations held with different persons on different dates. The value of the book, we hope, lies as much in the light the Master's luminous words shed on many intricate problems of life and religion, as in the vivid portraiture it offers of the intensely spiritual yet human life of the Great Master in whom those words were a living realisation. The book also reveals how intimate his relations were with his devotees and with what solicitous care he guided his disciples to the realisation of the Eternal Life and Love Divine.

We are painfully aware that in their present garb the words of the Master have lost much of their fire and inspiration; but, even as they are, we offer them to the public with the hope that the blessed word may bring solace and

comfort to many a weary traveller in the thorny paths of the world.

From the many severe references to *Kamini-Kanchana* which the book contains, it is not to be inferred that any hatred for 'woman' or 'gold' in themselves is implied. What the Master really means is the strongest condemnation of 'lust' and 'greed'. The reason why he prefers to use concrete terms rather than abstract notions lies in the psychological fact that the ordinary mind is more apt to think in terms of things than principles.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA MATH } MYLAPORE, MADRAS } <i>October 16, 1922</i>	PUBLISHERS
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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

∴ The present edition is an improvement upon the first. Herein the language has been edited and improved mostly by a Western friend to whom we offer our sincerest thanks. The index too has been enlarged. We are sure, like the previous edition the book will be warmly welcomed by all seekers after Truth.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA MATH } MYLAPORE, MADRAS } <i>September 1, 1928</i>	PUBLISHERS
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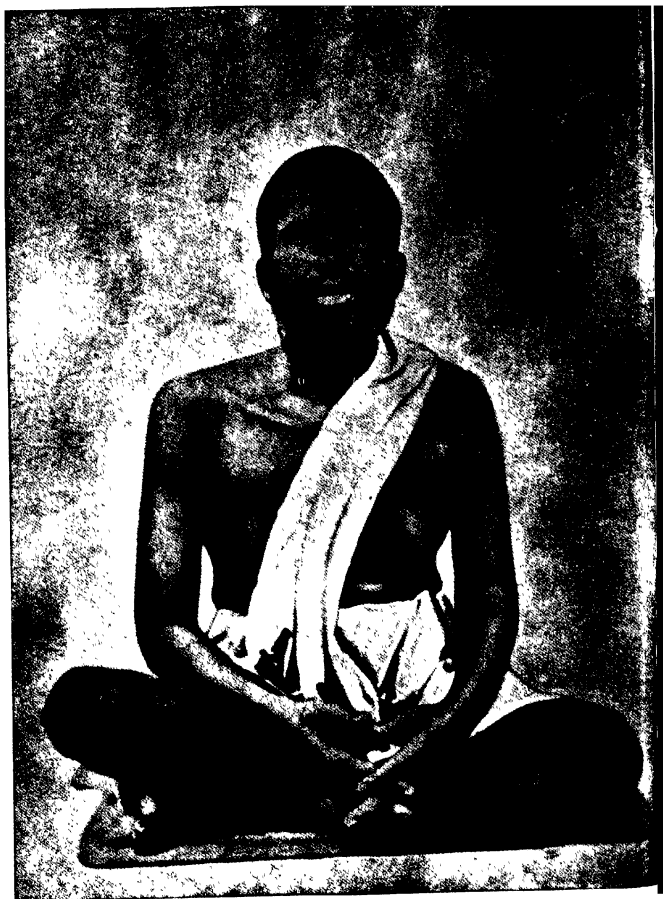
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SRI RAMAKRISHNA DEVA

GOSPEL OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

CHAPTER I.

THE DAKSHINESWAR TEMPLE,—AUGUST, 1882

I.

On Thursday, the *Shravana Dashami* of the bright fortnight,—the 24th of August, 1882,—when M. arrives at the Temple Garden, he finds the Master talking with Hazra in the north-eastern veranda of his room. M. makes his humble obeisance at his lotus-feet.

Says the Master smilingly to him, “I should like to meet Iswar Ch. Vidyasagar a few times more. The painter, you know, first designs the outline and then fills it in leisurely with details of line and colour;—the image is first moulded out of clay, then plastered, next painted white all over, and finally comes the fine brush-work! Everything is fully ripe in Vidyāsagar, but it is hidden. So he is doing a lot of good work, but knows not that God is lying concealed in his inmost heart, knowing which, one gives up all work and longs to cry unto the Lord.”

And as he talks, he paces the corridor, and again stops to talk to M.

Sri Ramakrishna: *Sadhana* is indispensable for realising the content of the soul.

M.: Is it to be practised for ever?

Sri Ramakrishna: No; but in the beginning you must be up and doing, and then it becomes easier afterwards.

Sadhana and its reward.

For, the man must be alert at the helm so long as he steers his craft along tortuous water-courses and through agitated waves and storm and rain. But once he has passed them, he can sit comfortably at the helm and spread his sail in the favourable wind and prepare his *chilum*. Even so, when the raging blasts of *Kamini-Kanchana* * have blown over, it is all peace and calm.

"Some have the signs of the Yogi manifested in their person; they should yet be on their guard. For 'woman and gold' are the impediments to Yoga, and if the desire arises in a person's mind to enjoy them, he falls and is dragged down into the world; and he can turn back towards God and regain his former exalted state of spirituality, only when he has satisfied those desires. Have you seen a *Satkakal* †?"

M.: No sir, I haven't.

Sri Ramakrishna: We have got it in our parts: it is a piece of straight bamboobent over

* 'Woman and gold.'

† 'Spring-trap.'

on the ground, held down with a line, and with hook and bait at the end. This bait the fish swallows and at once the bamboo springs back and becomes as perpendicular as before.

“If one side of the balance is laden, the lower needle never coincides with the upper needle; the one is like unto our mind, and the other is God, and the at-one-ment of these two ‘needles’ is what is meant by Yoga.”

The secret of
Yoga

“Until the mind has attained a serene state, Yoga is impossible. The world’s blasts are constantly disturbing the flame of our mind’s lamp. But if that flame becomes absolutely steady, it will be the true state of Yoga.

“‘Woman and gold’ are the veritable obstructions to Yoga. Therefore do ever discriminate. What is there in a woman’s body? Nothing but flesh, blood, fat, entrails, worms and such other filth;—then why any love for it?

“I would sometimes assume *rajasic* moods of mind, in order to get complete renunciation. Once I desired to put on gold-embroidered robes and rings on my fingers, and to smoke a *hookah* with a long pipe. They got the robes for me and I dressed myself. Then I said to my mind, ‘These, O mind, are real gold robes!’ and threw them away in disgust. And I said, ‘O my mind, this is what is called *shawl*, this is a ring, and this is smoking with a long pipe!’”

"And never again did these desires arise in my mind."

It is almost evening; the Master and Mani are standing by the door, talking alone in the south-eastern veranda.

Sri Ramakrishna: The Yogi's mind is ever immersed in God, ever self-absorbed. You understand this from his very eyes; they have an aimless look just as when the bird hatches its eggs and its mind is all there, and it merely looks on. Can you show me such a picture?

Mani: I will try to find it somewhere.

II.

The shades of evening have descended on the earth. The temple-lighter has ignited the lamps in the temples. Here in his room—filled with the fragrance of burning incense, and illumined by a single lamp in a corner—sits the Master on the smaller cot, absorbed in the thought of the Mother and reciting Her blessed names. A little while after, breaks forth the music of conch-shells and bells from the temples, announcing the holy *Aratrikam* *!

It is the tenth night of the months's bright half, and the moonlight has flooded the earth all around.

The *Aratrikam* has been over for some time. *Sri Ramakrishna* is now engaged in a conversation with *Mani*, sitting alone on the floor.

* 'Evening service—when offerings of light and other article are made to the Deity.'

Sri Ramakrishna : Ever work unattached. The works that are done by Vidyasagar are good, for he tries to be selfless.

Mani : Yes, sir. But may I know if work and God can exist simultaneously? Can 'Rama' and 'Kama*' meet together. The other day I came across a Hindi couplet which says that 'Rama' and 'Kama' can never co-exist; for when one of them is present the other must cease to exist.

Sri Ramakrishna : But every one *is* working. To sing of the Lord and His blessed names, that also is work. When the Monists meditate, 'I am That,' they also work. Even breathing is work. Thus none can escape work. Therefore do work, but dedicate its fruit to God.

Work without attachment; and family life with discrimination.

Mani : Sir, may I try to earn a larger income?

Sri Ramakrishna : Yes, if you mean to devote it to the family life based on discrimination. But take care, earn your money by honest means. For our aim is not earning money, but the service of the Lord and wealth devoted to God is beyond cavil.

Mani : How long, sir, have I obligations to the family?

Sri Ramakrishna : As long as it is not beyond the difficulties of maintenance. But if your

* Desire.

children can support themselves, you have no duty by them. Have you not seen how the mother bird pecks at her young ones, if they come to be fed by her, when they are themselves able to pick up grains?

Mani: How long have I to work?

Sri Ramakrishna: The flower falls when the fruit has come out. Even so, when
 The duration of Karma you have realised God, you have no more work to do, nor can you turn your mind to it.

“A man dead-drunk cannot retain consciousness; when he has taken only a few glasses can he look to his business. So never fear; as you proceed towards the Lord, He will take away your ‘*karma*,’ just as the mother-in-law lightens the duties of the daughter-in-law when she is with child, then releases her from all work when she is about to be confined; and at last when the daughter-in-law becomes a mother, she allows her to take care of her child alone.

“Have done with the few *karmas* you have yet to fulfil and then it will be all peace. You cannot call back the mistress of the house when she is going to her bath after her day’s work in the kitchen and the household.”

Muni: Sir, what is exactly meant by God-realisation and God-vision? And what are the means to its attainment?

Sri Ramakrishna: The Vaishnavas hold that those who are on their way to God and those who

have realised Him are of various classes and grades: these are *Pravartaka**, *Sadhaka*, *Siddha* and *Super-siddha*. He who has just entered the path to God is a *Pravartaka*. A *Sadhaka* is he who is practising certain spiritual exercises, worshipping and meditating on Him and singing His blessed praise and names. He is a *Siddha* who has realised the Being of God in his own consciousness; as a Vedantic allegory explains, it is as though a man were searching for his sleeping master in a dark room, groping about amongst couches, windows and doors, and rejecting each, saying, 'Not this,' 'Not this,' till he comes upon him and cries out, 'Here is the master.' That is to say, he has perceived him as 'existing,' he has found him, but does not yet know him intimately.

"The next class is the *Super-siddha*. To converse with the master intimately, to realise God more completely through love and devotion, is a higher stage. A *Siddha* has no doubt attained God, but a *Super-siddha* has entered into a deeper communion with Him.

"But to possess the Lord you must establish a certain human relation with Him; it may be either *Shanta*, *Dasya*, *Sakhya*, *Vatsalya* or *Madhura*.

"*Shanta* is the mood in which the Rishis worshipped God. They never desired anything

* 'Neophyte.'

else but Him; even as the wife devotedly faithful to her husband, finds in Him the very ideal of beauty and love.

"Hanuman's was the *Dasya Bhava*,—the attitude of the servant. He was a mighty lion in his service of Rama. The wife also has the same attitude, serving the husband with heart and soul. So also has the mother, as in the case of Yashoda.

"*Sakhya* is the familiar relation of friends: says one to the other, 'Come, come, sit by me!' Sridam and other cowherd friends of Sri Krishna used to entertain him with the remnants of the fruits they had eaten, and would ride on his shoulders!

"*Vatsalya* is typified by mother Yashoda. The wife, too, has a little of it,—she feeds the husband with the very breath of her life: The mother is satisfied only when her child eats its fill. And Yashoda used to wander about, butter in hand, searching for Sri Krishna to feed him.

"*Madhura* is represented by *Srimati*, and by the wife as well. And it contains all the four preceding *bhavas* (moods)."

Mani: Do we see Him with *these* eyes when we see God?

Sri Ramakrishna: No, He cannot be seen with the physical eye. In the course of *Sadhana*, a 'love-body' is created in you and with its eyes and ears of love you see and hear Him. It has its generative organ too.

At that Mani bursts out laughing, but the Master continues unannoyed.

“ With this love-body the soul enjoys intercourse with God.”

Mani has by now regained his gravity.

Sri Ramakrishna: Without the intensest love for God, this is not possible. Only such love enables you to see Him everywhere, even as the eye, only when it is extremely affected with jaundice, sees yellow all around.

“ In that state you verily perceive, ‘ I am He.’ A drunkard, highly intoxicated, says, ‘ I am Kali!’ The Gopis, in their love-intoxication, said ‘ I am Krishna!’ If you look long at a flame, you will see flames everywhere;—thus you will verily see Him everywhere, if you think of Him through day and night.”

But Mani thinks that those flames are not real, but only illusory. The Master divines his doubt and says, “ Verily by thinking of *Chaitanya* * none ever loses his sense. Vision of God,—
no illusion. Sivanath once said that too much thinking of God confounds the brain; to him I said, ‘ Can the thought of God-consciousness ever produce delusion?’ ”

Mani: Now I see it, sir,—this meditation is not of evanescent things. Why indeed should man be subject to delusion, if his mind is ever

* The word *Chaitanya* is untranslatable. It refers to the Intelligence, or the Knower, behind every state of consciousness.

fixed on Him Who is the Immutable Consciousness Itself?

The Master is pleased with Mani's reply and says, "This is His grace! Without the grace of God, none can overcome scepticism. And indeed, till you realise the Self, you cannot be absolutely free from doubts.

"Never fear, if you have attained His grace. The child that holds its father by the hand, while walking, may stumble; but if the father holds the child, what need it fear? And verily you transcend all suffering, when He has, out of His infinite mercy, once vouchsafed you His divine vision and removed your doubts. But you must yearn to know Him and eagerly pray to Him and struggle hard; only thus can you deserve His mercy. The mother's heart melts at the sight of her child running about panting-for her and she reveals herself."

'But why does she worry us like that?'—so thinks Mani, and at once the Master responds, saying, "It is Her wish that there should be a little running about; then it will be great fun! She has created the universe for *leela*, for pleasure's sake; and this is what is called *Mahamaya*. Therefore we have to take refuge in Her who is the Cosmic Energy Itself, for the bonds of Maya have fettered us and only by cutting them asunder can we hope to see God.

"Do you aspire after Divine grace?— then propitiate the Mother, the Primal Divine

Energy. Yea, She is Mahamaya Herself. She it is who has deluded the whole world and is conjuring up the triple device of creation, maintenance and dissolution. She has spread a veil of ignorance over all, and unless She unbars the gate none can enter the ‘Inner Court.’ Left outside, we see only the external things, but the Eternal One, the Satchidananda, remains ever beyond our ken. Hence we find it written in the *Chandi* that the gods are making their earnest prayers to Mahamaya for the destruction of Madhu and Kaitabha.

The Primal
Divine Energy
and Her sadhana.

“Energy is the basis of the creation. This Primal Divine Energy has the two-fold aspects of *Vidya* and *Avidya*. *Avidya* deludes and is the mother of *Kamini-Kanchana*, ‘woman and gold’; and it binds. But *Vidya* is the source of devotion, kindness, knowledge and love, and it takes us towards God.

“*Avidya* has to be propitiated and hence the institution of Shakti-worship.

“Various are the ways of worship for gratifying Her,—as Her hand-maid or companion, Her hero or child. What is ‘the hero-attitude?’—it is to please Her even as a man pleases a woman by intercourse.

“Shakti-sadhana is no joke; there were very strenuous and dangerous practices.

“I passed two years as Mother’s hand-maid

and friend. Mine, however, is the mood of the child, and to me the breasts of any woman are like unto my mother's.

"Women are so many images of Shakti. In the western parts, the bridegroom holds a knife in his hand during the marriage ceremony, and in Bengal, a nut-cracker; the idea is that he will cut the bonds of Maya with the help of the bride, who is Shakti Herself. This is *Veerabhava*, 'the way of the hero.' But I never practised it; mine is the mood of the child.

"The bride is the very embodiment of Shakti. Have you not seen how, during the wedding, the bridegroom looks awkward and sits shyly behind? but the bride,—she is bold!

"When a man has realised God, he forgets His external manifestations and the glories of His creation. Verily His blessed vision obliterates the consciousness of His splendours; for, immersed as he is in the bliss divine, the devotee has lost all bearings. I never want to know the name and whereabouts of Narendra when I see him,—where is the time for it? Some one inquired of Hanuman which day of the fortnight it was; he replied, 'Brother, I never know what day of the week or fortnight it is or what is the position of the stars;—I think of Rama alone.'"

Religion and
science.



CHAPTER II.

THE DAKSHINESWAR TEMPLE—OCTOBER, 1882

I.

At 9 in the morning of Sunday, the 22nd of October, 1882,—the day of *Vijaya* of the month of Aswin—Sri Ramakrishna is reclining on his smaller cot, talking to Mani who is seated on the floor of the Master's room.

Rakhal has been staying with the Master for some time, so also his nephew Ramlal, and Hazra. Narendra and Bhavanath pay him occasional visits ; whereas, Ram, Manomohan, Suresh, M. and Balaram come to him almost every week. Baburam, however, has seen him only once or twice.

Says the Master to Mani, “Have they allowed you Puja holidays?”

Mani: Yes, sir ; I attended at Keshab Sen's all the three days of Saptami, Ashtami, and Navami.

Sri Ramakrishna: Indeed! ~

Mani: There I heard a nice interpretation of the Durga Puja.

Sri Ramakrishna: What can it be?

* *Saptami*, *Ashtami* & *Navami* are respectively the 7th, 8th & 9th day of the bright fortnight of the month of Aswin, and it is on these three days that the autumnal worship of the Divine Mother Durga is celebrated. The fourth day is called *Vijaya*.

Mani: At Keshab Sen's, they hold regular morning prayers till nearly 11. It was during these morning sermons that Keshab Sen expounded the significance of the Puja. He said, 'If one realises the Mother and can install Her in the temple of his heart, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Kartik and Ganesh come of themselves! For Lakshmi is Mother's Glory, and Saraswati, Knowledge; Kartik, Power; and Ganesh, Success; and all these are gained along with the realisation of the Mother.

The Master's
Antaranga
devotees. making occasional queries and at last remarks, "Don't you go hither and thither, come here alone."

"For those who belong to the inner circle of my devotees*, shall come here alone. Naren, Bhavanath and Rakhal are my *antaranga* and they are no nobodies. Will you entertain them once? How do you think of Narendra?"

Mani: Oh! very highly.

Sri Ramakrishna: Don't you see how many fine qualities he possesses?

"He can sing well, play musical instruments and is very learned. He has strong control over the senses, and says he will never marry,

* Such devotees are called *Antaranga* i.e., 'the inner body,' as opposed to *Bahiranga* or 'the outer body' of devotees. The distinction is evidently based on the comparative strength of their devotion and love and their spiritual capacities.

and he has the thought of the Lord from his very boyhood."

And thus proceeds the conversation; and the Master asks, "How are your meditations going on? Which do you like better—His form or formlessness?"

Mani: Sir, my mind does not at present incline towards form. I cannot, however, fix my mind on His formlessness.

Sri Ramakrishna: Do you see?—the mind cannot at once be fixed on the Formless One; meditation on His form, I think, is quite good in the primary stages.

Mani: Do you mean meditation on these *earthen* images?

Sri Ramakrishna: Why *earthen*? *Spiritual* forms!

Mani: Yet, sir, I have still to imagine hands, feet and all that. But I also consider the fact that, as you said, it is impossible to concentrate the mind without meditating on His form. Well sir, considering that He can assume infinite forms, may I meditate on my own mother?

Sri Ramakrishna: Yes, you may. For she (one's mother) is your Guru and is the very self of Brahmanamayee (Divine Mother).

Mani is silent for a while and then inquires, "Sir, what is the nature of the realisation of God's formlessness? Can it not be described?"

Sri Ramakrishna: (after a short, thoughtful pause) "Do you know what it is like?" Again he lapses into silence, and then he utters

16 THE JNANI AND THE DIVINE INCARNATION

one sentence to describe the realisation of God's form and formlessness and is silent again.

Sri Ramakrishna: (after a while) Do you know Sadhana is indispensable for a true understanding of this experience. You must take the trouble of procuring the key that will unlock the door of the treasure-house, where lie the jewels and stones, if you want to see and take them out. Otherwise, if you stand outside the locked room and only imagine you have opened the door, broke open the treasure-box and have got out the jewels, will that do? You must try and struggle, you must realise.

II.

Sri Ramakrishna: The Jnanis think of God as formless, and they do not believe in Divine Incarnation. Arjuna invoked Sri Krishna as the Absolute, *the Purna Brahman*. To which said Sri Krishna, 'Come and you will see whether I am such or not.'

And then leading him to a certain place asked, 'What do you see here?' 'A big tree,' Arjuna replied, 'and bunches of blackberry-like fruits hanging on it.' 'Nay, my friend,' said Sri Krishna, 'come closer and you will find that these are not blackberries, but innumerable Sri Krishnas like my own self, growing on it!' The idea is that from the Absolute, the *Purna Brahman*, infinite Incarnations are taking birth, and passing away!

* The philosopher
and the doctrine
of Divine Incar-
nation.

"Kabirdas was greatly inclined towards the formless aspect of the Lord; so of Krishna he would say, 'What worship to him?—He danced like a monkey to the claps of shepherdesses.'

(Smilingly) "I am, however, one with both the *Sakaravadi* and the *Nirakaravadi**."

Mani: (smiling) You are as infinite as He of Whom we are talking: verily you have no end!

Sri Ramakrishna: (smiling) You have found it out. Do you know—one has to practise all the creeds once and pass through these diverse paths? The dice-cube cannot reach the centre square until it has completed the circle; but once there, none can overtake it.

Mani: Quite true.

Sri Ramakrishna: There are two classes of yogis, *Bahudaka* (many-watered) and *Kutichaka* (hut-dweller). The Sadhu that is always on pilgrimage and has not yet attained to peace of mind is a Bahudaka; but he whose travels are over, whose mind has become serene and peaceful, settles in one place and does not move. In such a settled life, he has the fulness of joy, and needs no visit to holy places. If he does go there that is only for inspiration.

"I had to practise all the religions once—Hinduism, Islam and Christianity, and I have

**Sakaravadi*—he who maintains that God has form and
Nirakaravadi—he who thinks God to be formless.

also followed the paths of the different denominations of Hinduism—Shakta, Vaishnava, Vedantin and other sects. And I have found that it is the same God towards Whom all are travelling; only they are coming through diverse ways.

“When I went on pilgrimage, it was some times a regular torture. Once at Benares, as I sat with *Sri Ramakrishna's* *Reminiscences.* *Sejo Babu** in the parlour of Raja Babu, they talked of worldly affairs, of money and of land. At that I burst out, crying, ‘O Mother, where hast Thou brought me? I was quite happy at Dakshineswar!’ I visited Prayag†, but it was the same tank, same grass, same trees and same tamarind leaves.

“But holy places are no doubt inspiring. At Brindavan, where I went with Hride and Mathur’s family, the very sight of *Kaliyadaman Ghat*‡ used to fill me with divine inspiration, and I could not contain myself. It was in that Ghat that Hride would bathe me like a little child.

“During my evening walks along the Jumna, I used to find the cattle of Brindavan returning home across the sands of the river

*Mathuranath Biswas, son-in-law of Rani Rasmani, founder of the Dakshineswar Temple.

† Allahabad.

‡ Bathing place in Brindavan sanctified by the memory of Radha and Krishna.

from their pasture. Once as I saw this, the thought of Sri Krishna flashed up in my mind, and I ran mad-like, crying, 'Where is Krishna?' 'Where is Krishna?'

"On my way to *Shyamakunda** and *Radhakunda**, as I was being carried in a palanquin, I got down to visit the Mt. Govardhan.* Its very sight so overwhelmed me that I ran up to its summit and lost all external consciousness. Then the *Brajavasins*† went up and got me down. As I went towards the *Kundas* and looked on the same fields and trees and birds and deer on the way, I could not contain myself. Tears damped my clothes, and the thought again and again came to my mind, 'O Krishna, all else remains the same but where art Thou?' Thus I sat silent in the palanquin, unable to utter a single word. Hride was following close behind and he had warned the bearers beforehand to be on their guard about me.

"Ganga Mayee, an old lady living in a solitary hut near *Nidhuvan**, was extremely fond of me. After observing my spiritual condition and ecstasies, she used to speak of me as the embodiment of Radha herself and called me 'Dulali'‡. To be near her, was for me to forget all about bath, meal, or going home;

* Places in Brindavan sanctified by the memory of Radha and Krishna.

† 'Residents of Brindavan'

‡ One of the names of Radha.

so Hride would sometimes bring over my food to me; she also occasionally entertained me.

"Ganga Mayee would sometimes fall into a trance. The sight of it attracted regular crowds. On one of those occasions, she jumped on-ride's shoulders.

"I never wanted to come away from Ganga Mayee. All arrangements were finally made for my stay: I would eat double-boiled rice, and she would have her bed on one side of the cottage and I on the other. When everything was thus completely settled, Hride said, 'You are a dyspeptic, who will look after you?' 'I will', said Ganga Mayee, 'I will serve him.' Thus they quarrelled over me, when, all on a sudden, the thought of my mother, waiting alone in the Nehavat of the Dakshineswar Temple, came to my mind and it became impossible for me to remain behind. So I said, 'Yes, I must go.'

"The ways of Brindavan are very nice indeed! When a new pilgrim arrives, the boys of Braja cry out, 'Take the name of the Lord and open thy pack!'"

After 11 A. M., the Master partakes of the *Prasadam* of the Divine Mother and retires for a short mid-day rest. In the afternoon, he resumes his conversation with the devotees, breaking out from time to time with the recitation of the Pranava—'Om'—and '*Ha Chaitanya!*' '*Ha Chaitanya!*'

It is evening—the evening of *Vijaya*. The Aratrikam is over in the temple. Sri Ramakrishna comes there and salutes the Mother. The devotees take the dust of his holy feet. The Master calls for Ramlal who has officiated in the evening service, and cries, “O Ramnelo, where are you?” For *Siddhi** has been offered to the Mother, and the Master wants to touch it. And he tells him to give a little of it to every one.

III.

About 4 P. M., on the following Tuesday, when M. and Balaram arrive at the temple in the same carriage from Calcutta, they find the Master standing by the meat shelf in his room. They make their respectful obeisance to him and take their seat.

The Master says laughingly, “I was going to take some sweets from the shelf, but no sooner did I put my hand on them than a lizard ticked, and I at once removed my hand. (All laugh.)

“Yes, all these things have to be observed. Now you see, Rakhal is ill and my limbs also are aching. Do you know what the matter is? This morning as I was leaving my bed, I mistook a certain person for Rakhal and saw his face.

* A sweet liquid made, among other ingredients, of *Siddhi* or hemp leaves, which is slightly intoxicating. It is customary to offer it to the Mother on the *Vijaya* day and distribute it among the devotees.

"Yes, one has to note the features of the body. The other day, Narendra brought here a friend of his, a one-eyed boy, though his other eye was not totally blind. But I said to myself, 'What is this that Naren has done?'

"There is another person who visits this place, whose food-offerings I cannot eat. He is employed in a certain office where he gets a monthly salary of rupees twenty; but he earns another twenty by writing a false bill. And because he tells lies, I scarcely talk with him when he comes here. He would sometimes absent himself for three or four days from the office and remain here. Do you know why?—he expects me to recommend him to some one for another appointment."

Balaram comes of a very devoted Vaishnava family. His father who is now old, is a very devout Vaishnava. He wears the traditional tuft of hair on his head and a garland of *tulasi* round his neck. He always tells the beads he carries in his hands. They possess large properties in Orissa, maintain free eating houses, and conduct the daily worship of the sacred images of Sri Radha-Krishna at Kothar, Brindavan and many other places. . . . Balaram has formed the acquaintance of the Master only lately, so the Master is imparting to him instructions in the form of stories.

Sri Ramakrishna: A certain person came here the other day: I am told he is a slave of that black woman of a wife. Why don't we see God?—it is because *Kamini-Kanchana* stand between as barriers. And I say, how could he dare to say before you that a Paramahansa came to his father and his father feasted him with a dish of fowls?

[Balaram laughs.]

“In my present mood I can take a little of fish soup, if it has been offered to the Mother. But now I cannot take meat, offered to Her; so I only taste it with the finger-end, lest Mother gets angry! [All laugh.]

“Well, can you tell me what is this condition of mine? I was going in a cart to the country from the Burdwan Railway Station, when I was suddenly overtaken by storm and rain, and there came from somewhere some people who joined the cart. My companions said they were robbers, so I began to take the name of the Lord. But sometimes I repeated, ‘Rama,’ ‘Rama,’ sometimes, ‘Kali,’ ‘Kali,’ and again, ‘Hanuman,’ ‘Hanuman,’ and so on. Can you tell me what this is?”

Does the Master mean that God is one, but His names are infinite, and that the different sects and denominations vainly wrangle with one another?

Sri Ramakrishna: (to Balaram) *Kamini* and *Kanchana* are *Maya* itself. And if you live long amongst them, you lose your spiritual consciousness, and think it is all well with you, just as a scavenger that carries night-soil is lost to all sense of loathsomeness.

"If you practise singing the Lord's name and praise, you will, by and by, gain devotion. (To M.) So never be bashful in this. For so long as bashfulness, hate and fear persist, one has no hope.

"They sing very nice *keertanam* in those* parts, playing on the *khol*†. And Nakurh Acharya is simply splendid in his songs.

(To Balaram) Do you not have establishments for the Lord's worship at Brindavan?"

Balaram: Yes, Sir, there is one *kunja*‡ for the worship of Radha-Krishna.

Sri Ramakrishna: I have been to Brindavan; *Nidhuvan* is a nice place.

* Kamarpukur and neighbouring places.

† A musical instrument.

‡ Lit., 'arbour,' an appellation commonly applied to temples at Brindavan.

CHAPTER III.

THE SHINTI BRAHMO SAMAJ—OCTOBER, 1882

I.

It is Saturday, 28th of October of the year 1882,—the second day of the dark fortnight of the month of *Aswin*. In the beautiful garden house of Benimadhav Pal at Shinti, a place nearly three miles to the north of Calcutta, the Brahmo devotees are eagerly expecting the arrival of the Master in the evening. For it is the occasion of the half-yearly festival of the Brahmo Samaj, which is held in the garden house, and Sri Ramakrishna, who so dearly loves the Samaj, has been invited to the festival.

The garden house is indeed a beautiful place, and, being extremely solitary, well suited for Divine meditation. Here during the spring and autumn seasons, S. Pal celebrates, the festivals of the Brahmo Samaj, to which he invites numerous devotees from Calcutta and the neighbouring villages. On the present occasion, Sivanath and other prominent Brahmos of Calcutta have come to the garden to join in the morning prayers and are now preparing for the evening worship; and their hearts are athrill with the anticipated joy of seeing the blissful appearance of the great

saint of Dakshineswar, hearing his fascinating talk about God and his rapturous songs, and witnessing his inspired dance.

The garden is already filled with the numerous invited guests. Some of them are sitting in the cool shade of arbours, others on the grassy bank of the garden lake, but most of them have already occupied convenient seats in the Samaj Hall eagerly awaiting the great one's arrival.

The whole place is vibrating with joy. The autumnal sky is reflecting joy in its deep azure bosom. The soft-blowing breeze has been all day long murmuring its sweet message amongst the trees and creepers of the garden. And the whole creation is singing, as it were, its chorus of joy,—

‘O the sweet wind blows o’er our heart, the wind of exceeding joy!’

‘God’s goodness has flooded us with its light!’

It is about 4 P. M.; the air is tense with expectation. And lo! there arrives the Master with a few devotees in a carriage. The whole assembly stands up to receive him, and as he smilingly takes his seat, a complete silence prevails in the Hall, and all eyes eagerly turn towards the joyous countenance of the Master.

II.

The Master smilingly looks at the devotees and says, “Here is Sivanath. You see, you are devotees, and I am indeed very glad

to see you. Ganja*-smokers would be exceedingly delighted to meet, and would even hug each other. [Laughter.]

“But to those whom I find to be averse to God, I say, ‘Go, and sit over there,’ or ‘Go, have a look at the building.’ [Laughter.]

“Again, sometimes, I find that some exceedingly worldly-minded and silly people accompany the devotees. When they find the devotees talking with me long, they cannot sit quiet. They become fidgety and repeatedly whisper, ‘When will you go?’ ‘When will you go?’ The devotees perchance would reply, ‘Wait a bit, we shall go after some time.’ But they get vexed and say, ‘All right, you talk; we go and wait in the boat.’ [All laugh.]

“If you ask the worldly to renounce everything and devote themselves to the lotus-feet of the Lord, they will never do it. That is why Gour and Nitai, the two brothers, consulted each other and made the following arrangements for attracting them. They said, ‘Come, take the name of Hari, and you will have a nice soup of *magur* fish and the caress of a young damsel!’

“The allurements of the last two items induce many of them to come to take the Lord’s name; and when they had tasted a little of the nectar of the Holy Name, they

* Hemp.

found out that the 'fish soup' was nothing but the streams of tears they shed in their love for God; and the earth was 'the young damsel,' and that the rolling on earth in the rapture of Divine love was the caress of the damsel.

“Nitai would employ any means to make men utter the Lord's name. Said Power of the Lord's Name. Sri Chaitanya, 'Very powerful indeed is the name of God! It may not bring forth any immediate result, but it must one day bear fruit, just as we find that a seed, which had been left long before on the cornice of a building, at last reaches the ground, and sprouts forth and bears fruit, —when the building cracks and is demolished.'

“Just as amongst the men of the world Sattwa, Rajas, or Tamas may predominate, so also has Bhakti (Devotion) its three *gunas*.

“Do you know what is the Sattwa of a worldly person? Perhaps his The three Gunas. house is in a dilapidated condition, he won't repair it; the pigeons are soiling the hall with their dirt; the court-yard is grown over with moss—he does not care. The furniture of the house is all old, but he does not like to be neat and fashionable. Nor does he care to dress well, —any cloth will do for him. But the man is exceedingly quiet and gentle, kind and guileless and never injures any one.

“A Rajasic man has his signs. He wears a watch with a chain, and several rings on his fingers. His house is finely fitted up with beautiful furniture, and on the walls of the rooms hang pictures of big people, of the queen and the prince. The house is white-washed and spotlessly clean. And he has various costly suits of dress; and his servants wear uniform, and all that.

“A Tamasic man has these signs,—sleep, lust, anger, egotism and such other qualities.

“Similarly, Bhakti has its Sattwa. And the devotee who possesses it, meditates on God in absolute secret, perhaps within his mosquito net; and people think that he is sleeping, and that having had no sleep during the night, he is so tardy to leave his bed. Of his body, he takes only as much care as is needed to appease his hunger; simple rice and greens will do for him. There is no luxury about his clothes or house-fittings. And he never flatters anybody for money.

“If any one has the Rajas of Bhakti, he perhaps paints the caste-mark on his forehead, and wears a *rudraksha* garland, interspersed with gold beads. [Laughter.] And when he performs his worship, he puts on a silk cloth.

III.

“And he who has the Tamas of Bhakti has a burning faith, and he literally extorts from God, even as the robber falls upon a

man and plunders his wealth. 'Bind! Beat! Kill!'—that is his way,—the way of the dacoits."

With this, Sri Ramakrishna bursts into singing with his rapturous voice, looking upwards,—

"O Mother, if I but die with Thy holy name on my lips, then must Thou save this helpless child of Thine.

"I care not if I have killed the sacred cow or the holy Brahmin, or even the child in its mother's womb. O, I care not if I have sinned by drinking, or even by killing a woman.

In spite of these darkest sins, I know I can verily become Brahman, if I but die with Thy holy name on my lips."

Sri Ramakrishna: 'What! I have taken Her name—I, a sinner? I am Her child,—I *am* an heir to Her glories!' This must be one's firm attitude. 24624

"If you can give a spiritual turn to your *tamas*, you can realise God. Command Him. He is no stranger to you, He is your own.

"Look here again,—this *tamas* may be utilised for the service of others. There are three classes of doctors, the highest, the mediocre, and the lowest. The doctor who feels the patient's pulse and goes away after prescribing the medicine, but does not care to know whether it is taken or not, belongs to the lowest kind. He who carefully advises the patient to take the prescribed medicine, and sweetly says, 'How will you be cured unless you take the medicine? Take it,—you are a good boy—I shall myself prepare it for you—he is a mediocre doctor. But the best doctor is he, who, finding all words useless, goes to the

extent of putting his knee on the chest of the patient and forcing the medicine down his gullet. This action is no doubt indicative of the tamas of the doctor, but it does good to the patient.

“In the same way there are three classes of religious preachers. Those who merely teach the disciples, but do not care whether they act up to their instructions, belong the lowest class of teachers. Those who, having their disciples' welfare at heart, make repeated endeavours to bring the instructions home to them, implore them to act up to their advice, and show their love to them, come under the middle class. And those who, finding their disciples persistently disobeying their instruction, resort to force in the end, —them I call the best of teachers.”

IV.

A Brahmo devotee asks, “Has God any form, or is He formless?”

Sri Ramakrishna: ‘This much and no further’ can never be said of Him. He is without form, and with form as well. To those that are Jnanis, that is, to those whom this world appears as a shadowy dream, He is formless. But the devotee feels that He is one entity, and the world quite another; so to him God appears in His personal aspect with form.

Ineffable nature
of Brahman.

“The Jnani—for instance, the Vedantin—constantly discriminates the Truth, negating all phenomena, saying, ‘Not this,’ ‘Not this.’ As a result of such discrimination, there awakens in him the consciousness that ‘all are false—the ego, the world and all—like evanescent dreams.’ Then the Jnani realises Brahman in his own consciousness, but cannot describe what His nature is by the words of mouth. Do you know what It is like? It is like a vast ocean, an ocean of *Sachchidananda* (Absolute Existence-Knowledge-Bliss)—an infinite expanse, no shores to bound it anywhere,—but here and there its water gets congealed into ice through the cold of Bhakti—gets solidified in the form of ice; that is He actually manifests Himself before His devotees, assuming some personal forms. But with the rising of the sun of Jnana, the ice melts away, and then He is no more felt to have a personal aspect, and hence one cannot see His personal forms any more. What He is, then nobody can tell. Who can say? The one who can say has vanished, no trace of his ‘I’ is found there.

“When one proceeds with the analysis of the Self, the ego or the ‘I’ vanishes away with the process. Just like the onion, peel off first the outer red skin, then the next thick white one, then again the next and so on, the whole thing disappears, and you find no kernel within.

“When one finds no more the existence of his ‘I’—and who is left there to seek it then?—there, at that state, who would express how one realises Brahman in Consciousness (intelligence)? Once a salt doll came to measure the depth of the ocean, but no sooner did it enter the waters of the ocean than it got dissolved in it, and so none remained to give information about the depth.

“It is the sign of Knowledge that, when it dawns fully on man, he becomes silent. Then the salt doll of ‘I’ melts away into the Ocean, becoming one with it,—there remains not even the slightest consciousness of separateness.

“When a farmer cuts open a channel to bring water into his field from the neighbouring tank, the water flows out with great noise. But when the water of the field comes up to the same level as that of the tank, such noise is no more heard.

“So long as this self-analysis does not find its end, man argues and discusses with much ado ; but he becomes silent as soon as the finale is reached. When the pitcher becomes full, *i.e.*, when the water inside the immersed jar gets united with the outside water of the tank—then you hear sound no more. The gurgling sound is heard only so long as the jar is not full. They used to say in olden days that ‘no ship returns after having once entered into the black waters of the high sea.’

"All difficulties disappear when dies the 'I.' But howsoever you may argue, analyse or ratiocinate, the ego never disappears completely. Hence for men like you and me, it is good to have the ego of a devotee—that 'I am a devotee of God.' For the devotee He is the *Saguna Brahman*, i.e., the God of infinite attributes. He manifests as a person with forms. He also hears prayers. Whatever prayers you utter are made to Him only. You are not Vedantins or Jnanins. You are Bhaktas. It does not matter much whether you accept the forms of God or not. It is enough to have the feeling that God is a person,—a person who hears our prayers, who creates, preserves and destroys the universe—a person of infinite power. He is easily attained through the path of Bhakti."

V.

A Brahmo devotee: Sir, can God be seen? If so, why do we not see Him?

Sri Ramakrishna: Yes, surely He can be seen. One can see His forms, as well as His formless expression. But how can I make you comprehend it?

Devotee: By what means can He be seen then?

Sri Ramakrishna: Can you weep for Him with intense longing of the heart? Men

weep a jugful of tears for children, for wife, for money, etc. But who weeps for God? So long as a child remains engrossed in play with its toys, the mother engages herself in cooking or other household works. But when it finds no more satisfaction in toys, it throws them aside and weeps out with a loud cry for the mother. Then the mother can remain no longer in the kitchen; she drops down the rice pot perhaps from the hearth, and runs in hot haste to the child and takes it up in her lap.

Devotee: How is it then, Sir, that there is so much difference of opinion about the real nature of God? Some say that He has form, and some that He has none,—and again we hear of various forms of God from those that maintain that He is with form! Why all this confusion?

Sri Ramakrishna: As a devotee realises, so he opines; but in reality there is no confusion in it in the least. First you should attain God somehow, then He Himself will make everything clear to you. Never having made any move towards that quarter, how could you expect to get all knowledge about Him?

“Listen to a parable. Once a man went to a garden and saw there a small animal on a tree. He came and told the fact to another man, saying that he had seen a beautiful red creature on a certain tree there

in the garden. The other man contested, 'Why, I too have seen the animal there, when I went to the garden; but it is not red, as you say; it is green.' There was present another man who bawled out, 'Nay, nay, I too have seen it, it is yellow.' There were others again, some of whom contended that it was white, some blue, some violet, and so on, and thus there arose a big quarrel. Subsequently they all went to the garden to verify the matter and saw a man sitting underneath the tree. On being asked, the man said, 'Well, Sir, I remain always beneath this tree, and I know the animal very well. What you all say differently about the animal is very true. It takes different colours at different times,—sometimes red, sometimes blue, sometimes yellow and so on. And sometimes I find it again devoid of all colours.'

"So only he who thinks of God always can know His real nature. He knows that He manifests Himself in various forms, in various ways, that He is with attributes and also He is the attributeless Absolute. Only the man who lives underneath the tree knows well that the chameleon puts on different colours at different times, and sometimes no colour at all: others only exhaust themselves in futile disputation.

“Kabir* used to say, ‘The formless Absolute is my father, and the God (in His relative aspect) with form is my mother.’”

“He appears exactly in the same form in which His devotee likes to see Him. Ah! Is He not of infinite grace towards His devotees? The Purana tells us that He assumed the form of Rama for the sake of His mighty devotee Hanuman.

“But form and all disappear before the ratiocination of the Vedanta. The final conclusion of that reasoning is that Brahman alone is true and the *world of Name and Form* is false. So long as you have the feeling that ‘I am a devotee,’ it becomes possible to comprehend God as a person and see His manifestation in various forms. But in the eye of reason, even the ego of the devotee must appear as a separating factor that has kept him at a slight distance from the Truth. Do you know why the form of Krishna or Kali appears three and a half cubits long?—Because of its distance. Even the sun appears small on account of its distance. Go near it and it would appear so big as beyond all your comprehension. And again, know you the reason why the form of Krishna or Kali is of dark blue hue?—that too on account of the distance. Just

* The famous saint of Northern India, who was claimed as their own by the Hindus and Mohammedans alike.

like the water of a big tank,—from a distance it appears green, blue or dark; but when you go near it and take some in your hand, you find it has no colour at all. The sky is blue at a distance, but has no colour near you.

“Hence I say, Brahman is without any attribute (Absolute) in the eye of the ratiocination of the Vedanta. What His real nature is cannot be expressed by word of mouth. But so long as you feel your individuality as real, the world also is real and real are the different forms of the Divine manifestation—real also is the perception of God’s personality.

“Yours is the path of Bhakti. This is a very good, a very easy path. Who can know fully the infinite God? And where even is the necessity to know Him fully? Having received this precious human birth, ours is only to get Bhakti at the hallowed feet of the Lord. If a jugful of water can quench my thirst, where is the necessity for me to measure the quantity of water the tank contains? I get quite tipsy even with half a bottle of wine, why then the endeavour to measure how much wine the tavern possesses?

VI.

Sri Ramakrishna: In the Vedas, mention has been made of the different states of a

Brahma-Jnanin. But the path of Jnana is the most difficult path; Jnana never comes so long as there is the least trace of worldly desires—the least attachment for *Kamini-Kanchana*. But this path is not for the Kali Yuga.

“The Vedas speak of the seven planes where the mind dwells. When the mind broods over the worldly ways, its habitat is in *linga*,* *guhya**, and *nabhi**; in that state the mind loses all its higher visions,—it remains engrossed in the lust of woman and money.

“The fourth plane is the heart. When the mind rises to this plane, then comes the first awakening of the soul,—the man sees a kind of divine light everywhere, and makes an ejaculation of awe and wonder. At this stage the mind never stoops low to the worldly pleasures.

“The *Kantha** is the fifth plane of the mind. When the mind comes there, all ignorance or nescience disappears. Then one does not like to hear or speak of anything but God. If he finds anybody talking of things other than God, he at once leaves his presence.

“The sixth is in the forehead. When the mind reaches this plane, one witnesses

* Generative organ, Excretory organ, Navel, Throat.

Divine expression all day and night. Even then there remains a slight consciousness of 'I'. The man, having seen that unique manifestation, becomes mad with joy and rushes to embrace it, but cannot do so. It is like the light of a lamp: one feels as if one can touch the light, but no, the glass intervenes and prevents it.

"The head is the seventh plane, attaining which, man falls into Samadhi, and the Jnani realises Brahman. At that stage the body does not last for a long time. He remains always unconscious to the external world—he cannot eat anything; if milk is poured into his mouth, it trickles down outside. He dies after remaining twenty-one days in this plane.

"This is the most difficult path of the Brahma-Jnanis,—but it is not for you. Yours is the path of Bhakti. The path of Bhakti is a very good path, and very easy also.

"Once a man asked me, 'Well, Sir, can you quickly teach me Samadhi?'

[Laughter.] After the attainment of Samadhi, all Karma drops off—Karma such as external worship, counting beads, etc., or the worldly activities. In the beginning there remains a great ado of work. But the more one proceeds towards God, the less becomes the ado, so much so that there eventually stops even the praying or singing the glorious names to

Samadhi and
the cessation of
work.

the Lord. [To Sivanath.*] So long as you do not come to the meeting, much talk about your name, attainments, qualities, etc., passes round; but the moment you come in all such talk ceases; everybody feels joy then at your sight; they simply cry out, 'Here comes Sivanath Babu,'—and there stops all further talk about you.

"When my present state (of life) came about I found one day, while going to perform *tarpana* in the Ganges, that all the water was falling down through the interstices of my fingers. Then I asked Haladhari with tears, 'Brother, what is this, what has happened to me?' Haladhari replied, 'It is called *galita-hasta*. After the realisation of God, the compulsion of all such duties like the performance of *tarpana*, etc., drops off.'

"In the *Sankirtan*† they first sing, '*Nitai amar mata hati*' (my Nitai is a mad elephant) '*Nitai amar mata hati*;' and gradually, as the devotional mood deepens they simply utter, '*hati hati*'; subsequently the word 'hati' is hushed within the mouth, and the Bhava-Samadhi is reached while uttering simply

* Sivanath Shastri of the Sadbaran Brahmo Samaj.

† *Sankirtan* in Bengal consists of the singing of devotional songs by a number of people in chorus to the accompaniment of a peculiar dance keeping time with the song.

‡ This is the first line of a devotional song in praise of Nitai, i. e., Nityananda, the first apostle of Lord Gauranga of Nadia. It means that Nitai is as great in strength as an elephant, and mad with God-love.

'ha—' 'ha—.' Then a dead calm comes over the man who has been hitherto doing the Kirtana.

"As at a feast: In the beginning there is a great hue and cry. When the guests sit down to their leaves (plates), the noise subsides a little; still there remains the cry of the call for the dishes. Next, when they commence eating, you find three-fourths of the noise gone. When curd, the last course, is served, then there is practically no noise, only '*soop*,' '*soop*.' After the dinner, they all go to sleep, and a perfect silence reigns.

"So I say, in the beginning there is much fuss of Karma. But the more you proceed towards God, the less it becomes. Finally comes the complete renunciation of work and the attainment of Samadhi.

"When the daughter-in-law is in the family way, the lady of the house—the mother-in-law—curtails her work; at the tenth month she is given almost no work to do. When the child is born, there comes a complete relief from household work. The mother remains with the babe, while the other members of the family look after the work of the house.

"Generally, the body does not remain long after the attainment of Samadhi.

God-realisation
and the preach-
ing of works.

But to some it remains for teaching the world, as it did, for instance, to Narada and others

and also to such God-incarnations as Chaitanya. After the well is dug, some throw away all the spades and baskets, but others again keep them with the idea that they may be of some use to their neighbours. Such great souls are moved with pity by the sufferings of the world. They are not so selfish as to care only for their own attainment of the Jnanam.

“But there is a difference in manifestation of powers. Ordinary souls fear to take up the task of teaching the world. The worthless timber only manages to keep itself afloat somehow; no sooner does a bird sit on it than it goes down at once. But Narada, and others like him, are not like that. They are big logs of wood which not only float themselves, but carry many men and animals across the river.

VII.

(To Sivanath) “I say why do you dwell so much on the glories of God? I also asked that of Keshab Sen. When once Keshab and his party were there, I wanted to hear how they lectured. So they held a meeting on the terrace over the Ganges and Keshab delivered a sermon. He spoke nicely; I went into a trance. After the lecture I said to Keshab, ‘Why do you say all this—“O God what beautiful flowers Thou hast made! Thou hast created the sky, the stars and the sea!”

Those who are fond of splendour, themselves only like to speak of God's glories.

“When the ornaments of Radhakanta were stolen, Sejo Babu said, ‘For shame, Lord! You could not save your own jewels.’ I rebuked him, saying, ‘What ideas are these of yours? He, of Whom Lakshmi herself is the handmaid, does He ever lack splendour? To you alone these jewels are precious things, but to God, they are mere clods of earth. Fie! never utter such mean things; what can you do to magnify His glory?’ So I say, a man seeks the *person* whom he delights in; what is the use of knowing his whereabouts, or the number of his houses, gardens and servants? When I see Narendra, I forget everything else: never have I even unwittingly asked him where he lived, who or his father was, how many brothers he had. Be immersed in the sweetness of His bliss. Infinite is His creation and infinite is His glory. What is the use of our knowing all other things?”

And again flow streams of music from the Master's divinely sweet voice,

“Dive deep, dive deep, O mind, dive deep into the Ocean of Beauty. And search deeper and deeper to the bottom; only then can you find the great Pearl of Love!

“In thine own heart abides Brindavan, the home of Love; only seek and discover it! And for ever and ever will the Light of Wisdom illumine thy mind!

“Who is he that can steer his boat on land? Says Kabir”
listen, O listen! meditate ever on the Guru's hallowed feet!”

Sri Ramakrishna: It is true, however, that when the devotee has realised God he wishes to witness His *leela*. When Ramachandra entered the city of the Rakshasas after the destruction of Ravana, the old Nikasha began to run away. Lakshmana said, 'How is this, Rama? This Nikasha is so aged and has suffered so much from the loss of her sons. Yet she is afraid of life and is running away.' Rama bade her have no fear and called her near him to learn why she was flying. Nikasha replied, 'O Rama, it is because I have lived so long that I could witness so much of your *leela*; I therefore desire to live longer, that I shall see still more of your 'play.' [Laughter.]

(To Sivanath) "I like to see you. And how can I live except in the society of the pure-souled? They indeed appear to me as friends of my previous birth!"

A Brahmo devotee inquires of the Master whether he believes in re-incarnation.

Sri Ramakrishna: Yes, they say there is re-incarnation. How can our narrow understanding conceive the ways of God? Many have admitted its truth; I therefore cannot disbelieve it. As Bhishma lay dying on his bed of arrows, he was found shedding tears. Sri Krishna and the Pandavas were standing by. Arjuna exclaimed, 'How strange, brother! Our grandfather who is Bhishma himself, truthful, wise, master of his self, and one

amongst the eight *Vasus**, even he is overcome by Maya in his dying hour and is shedding tears.' When this was communicated to Bhishma, he replied, 'O Krishna, you know full well I am not crying for that. But when I think that the Pandavas, whom the Lord Himself is serving as a charioteer, have no end to their troubles and tribulations, then the thought that I could not in the least comprehend the ways of God so overpowers me that I cannot restrain my tears.'"

VIII.

Now begins the evening service of the Samaj. It is nearly 8-30 P.M. After about two hours' dark-ness, the moon has risen in the sky, and the whole garden is flooded with her clear silvery rays. The devotees are chanting the praise of the Lord in the prayer hall, and the Master, intoxicated with the love of God, has begun to dance in overflowing rapture, and the devotees have encircled him, singing and dancing to the time of *khol* and cymbals. An ecstatic madness has seized them all, as if they had seen God face to face! Loud rises the chant of the Lord's name; and verily the neighbours, as they hear the holy chant, bless the host of the festival from their inmost heart.

Singing is over: Sri Ramakrishna now bows low to the ground in salutation to the

* *Vasus* are a class of deities.

Mother of the universe, and as he salutes, he says, "Bhagavat, Bhakta, Bhagavan! Salutations at the feet of the Jnani! Salutations at the feet of the Bhakta! Salutations to the devotee who believes in God with form! Salutations to him who believes in God without form! Salutations to the ancient knowers of Brahman! Salutations to the modern knowers of the Brahmo Samaj!"

And Benimadhav entertains the Master and the devotees with various preparations of delicacies; and in great joy, the Master partakes of the *Prasadam*.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DAKSHINESWAR TEMPLE,—DECEMBER, 1882

I.

On Thursday, the 14th of December 1882, corresponding to the bright fortnight of the month of Agrahayana, Sj. Bijoy Krishna Goswami, with a few Brahmo friends, has come to visit the Master in the Daskhineswar Temple. They have reached here in a boat from Calcutta with Sj. Balaram. The Sundays are generally crowded with numerous visitors; whoever, therefore, desires private conversation with the Master, thinks it advisable to come here on week-days.

It is noon. The Master is just taking his midday rest, and is sitting on his cot. Bijoy, Balaram, M. and others are squatting on the matting and the bare floor, facing to the west towards the Master. As they sit there, the placid, limpid waters of the holy Ganga greet their eye through the western door, from beyond the semi-circular portico, flower garden and the terrace, flowing as if in joyful murmur at the supreme felicity of bathing the pedestal of the house of God.

It is the winter season and everybody is well wrapped with warm clothing. Bijoy suffers from chronic colic pain and has therefore brought his medicine in a bottle to take at

the proper hour. He is still employed as a preacher in the Brahmo Samaj, though, of late, he is having differences of opinion with the Samaj authorities, but being in their payment, he has no help but to submit. He comes of a very holy family of Shantipur, the well-renowned family of Adwaita Goswami who was a great Jnani, that meditated on the Formless God, and was withal a great Bhakta, that embodied the very highest expression of devotion. One of the chief associates of Sri Chaitanya—Adwaita would dance in the intoxication of Divine Love, and in his ecstasy, he would not even know when his clothes slipped off. Such is the glorious ancestry of Bijoy. He has joined the Brahmo Samaj and consequently meditates on the formless aspect of the Lord. But the blood of his great forefather, surcharged with Bhakti, flows in his veins, and the 'seeds' of this devotion are abiding in him eager for their appointed hour to sprout forth. Hence it is that, attracted by the love-intoxication of Sri Ramakrishna, he sits enchanted for hours before him like a snake charmed and lulled into a poise by the magic incantations of the snake-charmer, drinking in the manna of Divine Wisdom that drops from his hallowed lips, and losing himself in the ecstasy of his presence. And that is why when the Master dances child-like in his rapture, Bijoy also joins him and dances.....

There was a boy by the name of Vishnu, living at Ariadal, who recently committed suicide by cutting his throat with a razor. The talk first turns on him.

Sri Ramakrishna: You see, the news of the boy's death has much aggrieved my mind. He used to come here and was a school boy. But he told me he was sick of the world. He lived for some time with relations in the western provinces; there in solitude, in the fields, forests and hills, he would constantly meditate on God. He told me he had visions of various Divine Forms.

"This perhaps was his last birth. Much of his work had been done in previous incarnations; the little that was left undone has perhaps been finished in this life.

"You must admit that we inherit tendencies from previous births. The story is told that a certain person while practising *Shava-sadhana** in a deep forest for the realisation of the Mother, was frightened by horrible visions and taken away by a tiger. Now another man was hiding there in a neighbouring tree for fear of the beast. He saw all these preparations for the Mother's worship; and having got down and purified himself, sat on the corpse and began to repeat the *mantram*. In a short while the Mother appeared before

* It is a Tantrik practice in which the Sadhaka uses a *shava* i.e., a corpse, for his seat.

him and said, 'I am pleased with thee; ask thy boons.' He prostrated himself at Her lotus-feet and said, 'O Mother, I want to know one thing: I am filled with astonishment at Thy action. The other man laboured so hard to collect all these necessities, and strove so long to gain Thy favour, yet Thou wert so unkind to him. While lo! I know nothing, I have done nothing, I am quite devoid of devotion and knowledge, and yet Thou art so gracious to me.' 'My child,' replied the Mother, smiling, 'thou rememberest not thy former lives, when thou didst work and strive hard for Me. It is the merit of those austerities that has offered thee this opportunity and has brought thee My divine vision. Now ask thou thy boon.'"

A Devotee: It is fearful to hear of suicide.

Sri Ramakrishna: It is a great sin to die by one's own hand. And one committing suicide has to be born again and again; and again and again he suffers the sorrows and tribulations of the world.

"But it is no sin, nor can it be called suicide, to leave the body after one has found the Lord. Some prefer to dispense with it when they obtain enlightenment: verily the mould of clay is no longer necessary after the image of gold has been cast.

Self-immolation
of the Liberated
Ones.

"It is many years since a boy from Baranagore, about twenty years old, used to visit me. Whenever he came here, he went into such a deep trance that Hride had to hold him that he might not fall down and break his limbs. He told me one day, 'I may no longer visit you; so adieu.' Some days after, I learnt that he had given up his body.

II.

"Men are said to be of four classes: (1) Bound, (2) Struggling, (3) Liberated and (4) Ever-perfect.

"This world is like unto the net, the *jivas* are the fish, and God is the fisherman. When fishes are caught in a net, some of them try to escape by tearing through it; that is to say, they want to be liberated. These are of the 'struggling' type. But not all of them that thus strive can succeed; only a few of them leap out of the net with a splash and men cry out, 'Ah! what an escape!' These few are the 'liberated' ones. Some fish, however, are so alert and wary that they never fall into the net; Narada and other 'ever-perfect' sages are never entangled in the meshes of the world. But most fish are trapped in the net, yet they are not conscious of the danger and their imminent death; they rush headlong, net and all, into the mud to hide, with no attempt at freedom, entangling themselves in the slime instead.

And there, though still within the net, they think they are secure. These verily are the 'bound' ones, strongly attached to the world, that is, to Kamini and Kanchana; sunk low in the depths of degradation, yet feeling quite happy! But to those who are seeking liberation, or have attained it, the world, verily looks like a hell. It sickens them. Therefore, after having attained knowledge and realised God, some of them give up their body. But such self-destruction, is of course, very rare.

"The fettered ones—the worldlings—are never awakened. Sorrows may assail them, frauds deceive them and dangers threaten them, yet they do not 'wake up'; even as the camel, so fond of the prickly bush and the nettle, does not cease browsing on them, though they make its mouth bleed. The man of the world suffers so much, yet in a few days he forgets everything. Perhaps his wife has died or has proved faithless. Lo! He has married again. Or perhaps his child has died; he weeps, but in a short while, everything has slipped out of his memory. And the mother of the child, who has been so much overwhelmed with grief, is again looking to her toilet and wearing ornaments and jewels. Parents are impoverished by their daughters' marriages and yet annually children are born to them. And those men, who have ruined themselves by law-suits, will still go to law.

They have not the wherewithal to provide well for their children, yet they will beget more children every year!

“It is sometimes like the snake which has caught hold of a mole, which
The ways of the worldling. it can neither swallow nor eject. The worldly man perchance has come to see that there is nothing substantial in the world, that every thing is skin and stone like the Amda (hog-plum). Yet he cannot forego it and set his heart upon God.

“I know of a relation of Keshab Sen who was fifty years old; yet he was playing cards, as if it were not already high time for him to take the name of the Lord.

“There is another sign by which you can know a bound one. If you remove him from the world and place him within holy surroundings, he will lose heart and despond and pine away, even as a worm that lives and thrives on filth will die, if you put it in a pot of rice.”

An intense solemnity prevails in the room.

III.

Bijoy: What must be the condition of a bound one's mind before he can aspire to Liberation?

Sri Ramakrishna: If, by the grace of God, he can acquire intense
Intense Vairagya. *Vairagya**, then only can he be released from the attach-

* Dispassion for the things of the world.

ment to Kamini-Kanchana. And what is this intense Vairagya—this vehement desirelessness? ‘By and by I shall realise God, but now I shall only take the name of the Lord,’—this is the attitude of feeble dispassion. But he, whose dispassion is acute and strong, longs and pants for God, even as the mother’s heart yearns for her child. He never seeks anything but God, and to him the world appears as a veritable well wherein he fears he may be drowned at any moment.

“His relations then seem to him like so many venomous serpents from whom he is prompted to fly away, and he does fly, too. Such is the strength of his impulse and determination that he never thinks of first settling his domestic affairs before seeking the Lord.

“Let me tell you a story. In a certain land there was once a very severe drought; therefore the husbandmen had to dig long channels to take water into their fields. Now one of them was of a very resolute temper, and he vowed one day that he would not stop digging till he had brought water into his field and connected it with the river. So he set to work, and when the time came for him to go to his bath, his daughter came with oil from her mother and said, ‘Father, it is time for you to rub oil and take your bath.’ But he replied, ‘Go you now, I have yet much

to do,' and till one o'clock in the afternoon he worked and worked and never thought of his bath. Then, his wife herself came into the field, and said, 'How is it you have not yet bathed? The dinner is getting cold. You always go to extremes. Why, you can finish your work to-morrow, or after you have had your meal.' At that the farmer abused her furiously and turned upon her with his spade, exclaiming, 'Are you an idiot? There is no rain and the crops are perishing; how will our children eat? Don't you see, you will all have to starve? I have vowed first to bring water into the field: then, only shall I think of bath and meal.' Frightened, the wife ran away, and the man digged and digged all day long till the field was connected with the river. And as he sat aside and watched the river water flow into his field with a murmuring sound, his heart was filled with a great satisfaction and joy. Then he went home, called his wife and said, 'Now give me oil and prepare a smoke'; and he bathed and ate and went to bed with a light and joyous heart.

"Such vehement determination is of the very essence of intense Vairagya.

"Now there was another husbandman who also was digging to get water into his plot of land. But when his wife went and told him to come away, as it was very late,

and as he should not overdo himself, he did not demur; instantly, he laid down his spade and said, 'As you say, let us go.' [Laughter] And that man never took water into his field. Such is the nature of feeble Vairagya. Just as without strong determination the farmer could not bring water into his field, likewise, without strong determination one cannot realise God."

IV.

Sri Ramakrishna: (to Bijoy) Why. do you not come here as often as before?

Bijoy: I very much wish to, but I am not free; I have accepted service in the Samaj.

Sri Ramakrishna: Verily, Kamini-Kanchana deludes man and takes
 'Woman' and away his freedom. It is
 servitude. 'woman' that causes the need
 of 'gold,' and hence comes servitude. You
 lose your freedom and can no longer do
 whatever you choose.

"The priests of Govindji at Jaipore were all celibates at first and then they were firm and high-spirited; so much so, that, when one day the king of Jaipore sent for them, they refused to go, and replied that if the king had any need he might go to them. So the king and his people made all of them marry, and thereafter he had no need to send for them; for they themselves came to him,

saying, 'O great king, we have come to bless you. Here are blessed flowers that have been offered to the Lord; may your majesty accept them.' And they could not help coming to him every day; they now wanted one thing or another—a dwelling house or money for rice-ceremony of their children or for their education.

"Do you know the story of the twelve hundred *Nerhas** and the thirteen hundred *Nerhis*? Veerabhadra, son of Nityananda Goswami, had thirteen hundred *Nerhas*, i.e., monk disciples. When they realised God, Veerabhadra became alarmed, and he thought, 'Now that they are *Siddhas*, whatever they say will come to pass and they will be a regular menace wherever they go, for if any man even unknowingly commits any wrong to them, he will surely come to grief.' So he called them and said, 'Go, finish your meditations in the Ganges and come to me.'

"These monk disciples were so mighty in spirit that, as they sat in meditation, they went into *Samadhi*; and the tides came and flowed over them and went, yet their *Samadhi* did not break. One hundred of these disciples, however, had divined the motive of their Guru, and in order to avoid disobedience to him fled away without seeing him. When the

* *Nerha*, of which the feminine is *Nerhi*, literally means "shaven-head." They were so called from their practice of shaving the head, being, as they were, monks and nuns.

remaining twelve hundred went to him, he said to them, 'These thirteen hundred Nerhis will serve you; I ask you to marry them.' 'As you please, sire,' they replied, 'but one hundred of us are missing.' Henceforth these twelve hundred had their respective mistresses with them, and they lost all their previous puissance and spirituality. It was because of the company of women that they could not retain their spirituality; for to live with a woman is to lose one's freedom. (To Bijoy) You yourself feel how low you have sunk in servitude. And you see how these learned men, with all their vast scholarship in English, have to serve the Englishmen and be daily trampled under their boots. At the bottom of all this is 'woman'. They have married and set up a gay fair, as it were, with their wife and children, and they cannot now break it, fain though they would do it. And thus they suffer from all these insults and humiliations of servitude.

"If one can invoke intense Vairagya and realise the Lord, one is no longer in danger of being attached to women. And even if he be a householder, he lives free from their attraction and has no more to fear from them. Of two unequal pieces of magnet, which will attract the iron? It is the greater one that will draw it; and God verily is the Greater Magnet, and compared to It, the

magnet of woman is very, very small. What can woman do?"

A devotee : Sir, should we then hate woman?

Sri Ramakrishna : He who has seen God does not see woman with a different eye ; consequently he will not fear her. He sees clearly that women are so many parts of Brahmayee, and so he worships them as Mother Herself. (To Bijoy) Come here, now and then,—I want very much to see you.

V.

Bijoy : The various engagements I have in the Samaj do not allow me to come here very often. But of course, I shall see you so whenever I find time.

Sri Ramakrishna : The task of a preacher is very difficult indeed. Unless you have authority from God, you cannot teach men. If you try without it, nobody will even heed you, and your words will have no power in them. Therefore by Sadhana or otherwise, first realise God. And when you have been ordained by Him, deliver lectures.

"There is a tank in those parts ; they call it 'Haldarpukur.' Its banks were polluted every night and every morning the neighbours, when they came to the tank, loudly abused those unknown offenders. But nobody heeded this abuse, and the next morning the

The Teacher
with or without
authority.

place was found dirtier still. So at last a man from the Government came and stuck up a notice saying, 'Commit no nuisance: any one doing it shall be punished.' Henceforth nobody ever polluted the place. [Laughter]

"So I say, when you have received authority from the Lord, you may become a preacher wherever you like and deliver lectures. For if He ordains you, He also endows you with power, and then it becomes possible for you to accomplish the difficult task of a teacher of men.

"A small tenant once sued a powerful Zamindar in the Court. Every one then guessed that there must be some man of power behind him, perhaps another big Zamindar, who was conducting the case. Man, poor insignificant thing! he can never teach mankind, unless he is endowed with the power of God."

Bijoy: Sir, do not sermons of the Brahmo Samaj bring salvation to man?

Sri Ramakrishna: What is man that he can hope to liberate others from the bondage of the world? He, the Creator of the illusion that bewitches the universe, He alone can grant us freedom from this Maya. He the Satchidananda, the Supreme Guide, is our only refuge. And what man can dare hope to procure for other men freedom from this world unless he has found the Lord and.

received ordination direct from Him and has been empowered with His commission?

“As I was once passing across the Panchavati, I heard the croakings of a frög, and I thought it had been seized by a serpent. But when I was returning, long afterwards, I heard the same croakings. So I looked for it and found that it was a water-snake that had caught the frog, which it could neither swallow nor eject, and it only prolonged its agonies. And I thought, ‘Oh! if a cobra had seized the frog, it would have been silenced after three croakings. But it is only a water-snake, and by seizing the frog, it has not only lengthened the sufferings of the frog, but has created its own miseries as well.

“And, indeed, if there is an efficient teacher, he destroys the egoism of his disciple at once. But if the guide, the teacher, be inefficient, it means suffering both to the teacher and the disciple: the egoism of the disciple is never destroyed, nor are his worldly ties sundered. And being as he is, in the hands of an incompetent teacher, he never attains Liberation.”

VI.

Bijoy: Sir, why are we bound like this? Why do we not see God?

Sri Ramakrishna: Man's ego itself is Maya! And this Ego has hidden everything

like a veil. 'Verily, with the death of 'I', all trouble ceaseth!' For if, by the grace of God, a man can once gain the knowledge that 'he is not the doer,' he assuredly becomes a *Jivanmukta*—('living-free') and transcends all fear.

"This Maya, that is to say, the Ego, is like unto a cloud which, though comparatively small, still veils the sun. The sun shines forth as soon as the cloud is removed: so if the Guru, in his infinite mercy, destroys our egoism, God becomes at once revealed.

"Only a few feet ahead was Rama, who is God Himself. But since Sita, that is to say, Maya, stood between, Lakshmana, the individual soul, could not see God.

"Just behold how I hide my face with this kerchief; now you no longer see me, even though I am so very near you. And verily God is nearer than the nearest; yet you do not see Him, because the veil of Maya hides Him.

"The real self of man is Satchidananda,—Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. But the Maya of the ego has imposed upon him various *upadhis**, and he has forgotten the true nature of his Self.

"The nature of man changes with each Upadhi. When a man wears a black-bordered muslin, the love songs of Nidhu Babu come

* "Attributes."

naturally to his lips and he begins to play cards and flourishes a stick when he goes out for a walk. Even though a man be thin, if he wears English boots he immediately begins to whistle; and if he has to ascend a flight of stairs, he leaps up from one step to another like a Sahib. If a man holds a pen in his hand, he will go on scribbling on any paper he can get hold of.

"Money, also, is a great Upadhi. When a man becomes rich, his nature undergoes a change, and he is no longer the same man. There was once a Brahmin who used to come here often and was very polite in his behaviour. One day, Hride and myself happened to go to Konnagore in a boat. As we landed we found a Brahmin sitting by the river, evidently enjoying the breeze. On seeing us, he said, Hallo, Thakur! How do you do?' At this tone of his address, I remarked to Hride, 'Hride! This man must have amassed wealth to address me in this fashion.' Hride had to laugh.

"A certain frog possessed a rupee which it stored in its hole. One day an elephant was going over its hole. At that the frog became so angry that it came out and acted like kicking at the elephant and said, 'How darest thou to go over my head?' Money makes one so proud.

“Egoism can be got rid of if enlightenment comes. For then one enters into Samadhi, and only in Samadhi is the ‘I’ obliterated. But such enlightenment it is very hard to attain.

“The Vedas declare that a man can attain Samadhi—the Samadhi that destroys the ego—only when his mind has risen to the seventh plane. Where does the mind dwell ordinarily? In the first three planes. These are the sexual organ, the anus, and the navel, through which the mind is strongly attached to the world—to Kamini-Kanchana. When the mind abides in the heart, the man sees the Light of God, and cries out, ‘Ah! What is this? what is this?’ Next comes the plane of the throat, and when the mind dwells in it, the man longs to speak and listen only to words about God. When the mind reaches the plane of the forehead between the eyebrows, he sees the form of Satchidananda, and wants to touch and embrace It, but he cannot; even as one who sees the flame within a lantern, but cannot touch it, however much one may wish to do so. And when the mind has risen to the seventh plane, the ego is no more, the self is plunged into Samadhi!”

Bijoy: When man rises to the seventh plane and attains the Knowledge of Brahman, what does he behold?

Sri Ramakrishna: Our lips cannot express what happens when the mind reaches this seventh plane. The ship, if it once enters the 'black waters' of the sea, never returns; none can say what happens to it. How can the ship then tell the story of the sea?

"A salt doll went to measure the depth of the sea, but the moment it went into the water, it melted. Who was there who would say how deep the sea was? That which could say became one with it. In the seventh plane the mind is annihilated and man enters into Samadhi and words verily can never speak of that experience.

"The 'I' that drags you into the world and binds you to Kamini-Kanchana, that 'I' is the 'I' of great evil. It is this 'I' which intervenes and causes the feeling of otherness between the Individual and the Universal Soul.

"If you place a stick upon the surface of an expanse of water, it will seem to divide it into two parts. But the water really is one entity, yet, because of the stick, it appears as two. The 'I' indeed is that stick. Take it off, and there remains the same one 'water' as before.

"What is this wicked 'I'? It is that which says, 'Don't they know me? I own so many millions. Who is greater than I?' If a thief steals only ten rupees from him, he first

wrings it out of the man, then belabours him heartily; and, not yet satisfied, hands him over to the police and has him put in chains. "What!", exclaims the wicked 'I,' "to steal ten rupees from my pocket! How dare he?"

Bijoy: If, till we get rid of the 'I,' we cannot be released from the ties of the world and attain to Samadhi, then it is better to take to the path of Brahma-jnana, that we may realise Samadhi. And as Bhakti Yoga is possible only with the existence of the 'I' is not Jnana Yoga preferable?

Sri Ramakrishna: Few only realise Samadhi, and transcend the Ego, but more often, it cannot be transcended. However hard you reason, it still persists in remaining, even as the *peepul* tree which you cut down to-day, sprouts again the next morning.

"If the 'I' must remain, let it remain as the 'servant I'. 'O God, Thou art my Lord and I am Thy servant'—live like that. And verily the 'I' of the servant and devotee of the Lord is not an evil. Too much of sweets brings on acidity, but sugar-candy is not of that kind. Jnana Yoga, the path of knowledge is very difficult,—you cannot obtain Knowledge till the body-idea is completely gone. In this Kali Yuga our mind is extremely attached to material things; we therefore cannot overcome the idea of the body or the ego. The path of Devotion is easier to

follow: with sincere earnestness, sing His name and praise, and pray to Him; without doubt, you will realise Him.

"Just as a line drawn on the surface of water only appears to divide it into two parts and quickly vanishes, even so the 'servant I,' or 'the devotee I,' or 'the child I,' is only a semblance of the Ego and not real."

VII.

Bijoy: So you advise us to give up the 'wicked I'; you say there is no harm in the 'servant I'.

Sri Ramakrishna: Yes, there is nothing wrong in the 'servant I,'—in the proud feeling that 'I am His servant and devotee.' It will rather hasten your progress towards God.

Bijoy: Well, Sir, what becomes of lust, anger and the other passions of those whose 'I' is only the 'servant I'?

Sri Ramakrishna: If this disposition of theirs is sincere and real, then their passions survive as mere forms. The 'servant I' or the 'devotee I' that remains after God-realisation cannot harm any one. When the contact of the touchstone transforms a sword into gold, the sword no doubt retains its original shape, but it can no longer cut.

"When the dry branch of a cocoanut palm drops down, it leaves behind only a mark on the trunk, which indicates the spot

where it once grew. Likewise the ego of a man who has realised God lives only as a mark, and his passions become empty forms and he becomes quite like a child. Sattwa, Rajas or Tamas—none of these Gunas can bind the child permanently, and its attachment for a thing is as quick as its detachment. You can cajole a five rupees worth of cloth from him in exchange for a half anna toy, though he would perhaps at first say to you, 'No, I won't, papa bought it for me.' To him everybody is the same; he cannot distinguish between who is great and who is small. He is therefore quite innocent of caste distinction. Perhaps his mother has told him to look upon somebody as his elder brother and he will readily eat from, the same dish with him though the man might be a carpenter. The child does not know hate, or what is holy or unholy.

"Some, even after Samadhi, continue to live as the 'I' of the servant or the devotee. The Bhakta, indeed, has this egoism—'I am Thy servant, Thou art my Lord. Thou art Bhagavan, I am Thy devotee'; and he retains a little of it even after he has realised God. His 'I' is not completely annihilated. On the other hand, by constantly cultivating this kind of egoistic feeling, one realises God; and this is what is known as Bhakti Yoga.

“If you tread the path of Bhakti, you may attain to the knowledge of Brahman as well. He, the Lord, is Omnipotent, and if He so wills, He can grant you even Brahma-jnana*. But the devotees, as a rule, do not seek the knowledge of the self; they want to retain the consciousness of a servant of the Lord or that of a child of the Divine Mother.”

Bijoy: Do not they who reason according to the Vedanta philosophy find him as well?

Sri Ramakrishna: Yes, one can find Him along the path of reason as well. This is called Jnana Yoga. The path of reason is extremely difficult. I have told you of the seventh plane where the mind loses itself in Samadhi. This Samadhi, this annihilation of the mind, is possible only when one fully realises that ‘God alone is true, and the world is false.’ But in this Kali Yuga, man’s life being engrossed in the physical world how can he feel the reality of God and the unreality of the universe? This perception is possible only when the physical consciousness is overcome. Indeed it is a scarcely feasible

* The distinction between Brahma-jnana—Knowledge of Brahman or the Self—and the ideal of Bhakti, is that in the former, the Sadhaka realises himself as ‘one with God,’ whereas in the latter, he looks upon himself as seemingly separate from God, as His servant, or son, or friend, etc.

task in the Kali Yuga to realise that 'I am neither body nor mind nor the twenty-four principles,—that I am beyond both happiness and misery and that I am unaffected by disease, grief, old age, or death. However hard you may persevere in reasoning it away, your 'body-idea' invariably reasserts itself, just as a *peepul* tree, which you think you have cut down to its roots, sends out a new shoot the next morning. Verily the consciousness of the body cannot be killed. Hence in this age, the path of Bhakti is the easiest and the best.

"And 'I like not to *become* sugar, I want to *taste* it.' I never wish to declare that 'I am Brahman.' I say, 'Thou art my Lord, I am Thy servant.' It is better to be plying the boat between the fifth and the sixth planes. I do not desire to cross the sixth plane and remain long in the seventh; for I have the longing to chant His holy name and sing His praise. The relation of a servant to the Lord is very good. And you know, it is the waves that belong to the Ganges; none ever say that the Ganges belongs to the waves.

"'I am He'—this is not a wholesome attitude. If any one entertains this idea before he has overcome the consciousness of the physical self, great harm comes to him, his progress is retarded and by and by he is dragged down. He deceives others and

deceives himself as well, in utter ignorance of his woeful plight.

“But Bhakti of any sort will not do to realise God. Unless you have the Devotion of Love, *Prema-bhakti*, you cannot find Him.

This *Prema-bhakti* is otherwise known as *Raga-bhakti*. Without love and attachment, none can attain to God. Until we have learnt to *love* Him, we cannot attain to him.

“There is another kind of Bhakti, called *Vaidhi-bhakti*—ceremonial devotion. You will have to recite His name so many times, you will have to fast and visit holy places, you will have to worship the Deity with such and such offerings and make so many sacrifices—such is *Vaidhi-bhakti*. And by repeated practice of these ceremonials, you at last acquire *Raga-bhakti*. But you must know that so long as you do not realise *Raga-bhakti*, you cannot realise God. You must love Him. Worldly ideas must totally vanish from your mind and your whole soul must go towards Him; only then will you reach Him.

“But some there are, who get this Devotion of Love directly: it is innate in them. They have it from their childhood, and even from their childhood they weep for the Lord. What is the ceremonial devotion like? It is like fanning to create a breeze. The *breeze* is what you want, fanning is only a means to

that end: it is even so with the object of realising the love of God that you repeat His name, practise penance and observe fast. But if the southern breeze begins to blow of itself, you throw off the fan: likewise, when attachment for the Lord, and love for Him comes to you of itself, *japam**, penance and other rituals go away of themselves. Who indeed will perform the rites and ceremonies, now that you are intoxicated with the love of God?

“So long as your devotion does not grow into ‘love’ for him, it is only a raw or ‘green’ devotion. But when it has grown into love, it becomes the ‘ripe’ devotion.

“He whose devotion is green cannot retain the words of God or spiritual instructions; only the man of ripe devotion can do it. Only a piece of glass coated with silver solution can retain the impress of the image that falls upon it. But a bare piece of glass cannot retain it; even if a thousand exposures of the object be given to it, it remains the same glass as ever. Verily, no spiritual instruction will avail anything, unless there be love of God already.”

Bijoy: Is Bhakti alone sufficient for finding and seeing the Lord?

Sri Ramakrishna: Yes, Bhakti alone brings His vision. But it must be ripe devotion, the Devotion of Love and Attachment,

* ‘ Repetition of the Lord’s name,’

the Prema-bhakti. When you have attained this devotion, you begin to love Him in the same way as the child loves its mother, or the mother loves her child, or as the wife loves her husband.

"When you realise this love of God, this Raga-bhakti, your old illusive connections with wife, children

How to see
Him.

or relations cease to exist; only your kindness to everybody survives. When you realise this love, the world appears as a foreign land where you seem to live only to work out your *Karma*, just as a man whose house is in the country may have his place of business in Calcutta and he lives there in a hired house to carry on his occupation. Indeed, when you learn to love God, your attachment for the world and your worldly wisdom leave you for good.

"So long as the slightest trace of worldliness remains, you cannot see God. The damp match-sticks will not strike fire however hard you may rub them; it will be a sheer waste of sticks. A mind polluted with worldliness is verily like a damp match-stick.

"When Srimati * said, 'I see Krishna everywhere,' her friends replied, 'How is it? We do not see him. Are you delirious?' Then she said, 'Dear friends, paint your eyes with the collyrium of love and you will see him.'

* One of the names of Sri Radha.

“It is said in your Brahmo Samaj song,

‘Who can know Thee O Lord, through rites and ceremonies,
unless this heart has learnt to love Thee?’

“Yea, if you can once succeed in getting this attachment, this love, this ripe devotion, you will certainly see Him both with form and without form.”

Bijoy: How can we see God?

Sri Ramakrishna: You cannot see Him until your mind has become pure. The mind is polluted with

The Grace of God Kamini- Kanchana; it is covered with dirt. The magnet does not draw a needle if it is coated with mud; when the mud has been washed off, then the magnet draws the needle. Verily, the pollution of the mind can be washed away with the tears of our eyes. If, with tears of repentance, a man prays to God, ‘O Lord, I shall never more sin again,’ then the stains of his mind are washed off. Then God, the Magnet, attracts his mind, which is like the needle, and he is plunged into Samadhi and attains to God-vision.

“But do what you will, nothing can be achieved without the grace of God.

“And does His grace come easily to a man? You must, once for all, banish your egoism. He cannot be seen so long as you feel that you are the ‘doer.’ Suppose some one is in charge of the store-room; if anybody,

then asks the master to give him something from the store, he says, 'there is a man in charge, why should I go there?' And, indeed, God rarely appears in the heart of a man who assumes that he is 'the doer.'

"It is only through His grace that one can see Him. He is the sun of knowledge. One single ray from Him has lighted the world with knowledge; and hence it is that we know each other and acquire varied wisdom of the world. If only He turns His light upon His face, we can have His vision.

"The sergeant goes his rounds with a dark lantern in his hand. None of the passers-by can see his face; but he, in the light of his lantern, sees all of them and they also see each other's face. If, however, any one wishes to see the sergeant's face he has to request him saying, 'Please turn the light on your own face, that I may see you.'

"Even so we have to pray to God 'O Lord, turn Thou the light of Thy knowledge on Thy own Self that I may behold Thee.'

"A house without a light betokens poverty. Hence the heart has to be illumined with the Light of Knowledge. 'Light ye, therefore the Lamp of Knowledge in your hearts, that ye may behold the face of Brahmanayee*!'"

It is time for Bijoy to take his medicine, and as he requires water to dilute it, the Master

* 'The Divine Mother.'

orders it to be brought to him. Bijoy cannot afford to pay for his conveyance to the Temple. Our Master, in his infinite mercy, still wants him to come to him and sends other devotees to bring him in their carriage or boat. It is Balaram who was sent to him this time, and it is he who will pay the boat-hire.

The day is ended. Bijoy, Navakumar, and his other Brahmo friends are returning to Calcutta with M. in Balaram's boat. By the time the boat lands at the Baghbazar Ghaut, the crecent moon, only four nights old, has risen, faintly illumining the earth with her pale rays. It is winter; the cold is setting in. And as the devotees return home, the sweet words of the Master still echo in their heart's chords and the image of his blissful countenance brightens the recesses of their soul.

CHAPTER V.

THE DAKSHINESWAR TEMPLE, — JANUARY 1883

I.

It is Monday, the 1st of January, 1883, corresponding to the eighth day of the dark half of the month of Agrahayana.*

At 8 o'clock in the morning, the Master is seated on the matting of the floor in his well-known chamber, wrapped in a moleskin garment to protect himself from the prevailing cold of the season.

By this time, most of the Antaranga devotees of the Master have gathered round him. It is now nearly a year during which Narendra, Rakhal, Bhavanath, Balaram, M., Baburam and Latu have come to know him and pay him frequent visits; and it is more than two years since Ram, Manomohan, Surendra and Kedar have been connected with the Master.

The Master is seated on the floor, near him is a tray of jilipi†—the offering of a devotee—and he takes a little of it and tastes it. M. and Prankrishna are seated before him; Rakhal also is present in the room, and Hazra is occupying his usual place in the south-eastern veranda.

Says the Master laughingly to Prankrishna,

* The eighth month of the Bengali year.

† A kind of sweetmeat.

“You see, I am given so many things to eat, because I take the Mother’s name. [Laughter.]

“But She does not give such fruits as gourd or Pumpkin; She grants ambrosial fruits, such as Knowledge, Love, Discrimination and Renunciation.”

Prankrishna came originally from the village of Janai.* He now lives in the Shyampukur section of Calcutta and is employed in the Exchange as the superintendent of the auction department. Having had no children by his first wife, he has married with her permission a second time and is now the father of a son. The Master sometimes calls him ‘the fat Brahmin,’ evidently referring to his tendency to obesity. Prankrishna is extremely devoted to the Master, and invited him, a few months ago, with his devotees to his place at Shyampukur and entertained them with various delicacies and sweets. . . . Though a householder, he always studies the Vedanta and declares that Brahman alone is real and that the world is false. Sometimes he says, *Soham*, ‘I am He!’ The Master tells him, “In this Kali Yuga, man’s life is centred in the material world, hence the most advisable course is the path of Bhakti as prescribed by Narada.”.....

* In Bengal.

Enters a seven-year-old child into the room. A strange transformation comes over the Master. Verily, he too has become a little child; for just as a child hides a sweetmeat from another child lest he should snatch it away, so the Master covers the tray of sweets with his hand and puts it aside; and lo! he is at once plunged into Samadhi.

II.

The Master is in Samadhi,—he continues in that mood of transport for some time. The body is motionless, the eyes are steady and winkless, and the respiration uncertain.

After a long pause he draws a deep breath,—as if returning to the world of the senses.

Sri Ramakrishna: (to Prankrishna) Not only is She formless, but She has form also. It is possible to see Her forms. By Bhava* and Bhakti they can be seen. Mother does appear in various forms.

“Yesterday I had a vision of Mother: I saw Her clad in a seamless ochre-coloured garment, and She talked with me.

“Another day She came to me in the form of a Mohammedan girl. She had a *tilaka* on her forehead, but was nude, a young girl six or seven years old. She began to stroll about with me and make merry.

* Spiritual mood

"When I was in Hride's† house, I had a vision of Gouranga—He wore a black-bordered cloth.

"Haladhari ‡ used to say that God is beyond both *bhava* and *abhava*—being and non-being—beyond all mood, mode and want. I went Mother what Haladhari had said and and told asked if all the divine forms then were false. Mother came to me in the form of in Rati's mother, and said, 'Letthee remain *bhava* alone.' I also repeated the same thing to Haladhari.

"At times I forget it and suffer. I broke my teeth for my not being in the *bhava*. So, until I get some command from God or see His vision, I shall ever remain in *bhava* and with Bhakti. Ay, what do you say?"

Prankrishna : Yes, sir.

Sri Ramakrishna : Ah, why, I am asking you! The One Who is within me is doing all this through me. At times I used to get the mood of Godhōd,—I could never be pacified unless being worshipped. I am the instrument and He is the worker; I do as He makes me do, I speak as He makes me speak.

"Prasad says: I have floated my bark into the sea of life and I sit there calm; I shall drift up when it flows up, and down when it ebbs."

† Hriday Mukherji, Sri Ramakrishna's nephew.

‡ Sri Ramakrishna's cousin.

"It is like the dry leaf before a gale,—now it is blown up into a good place, and now carried down into the dirty drain,—it goes wherever the wind takes it.

Self-surrender
to God.

"The weaver said that it was all by the will of Rama. 'By Rama's will they committed the robbery. By Rama's will I was caught by the police, and by Rama's will, again, I was released.'

"Hanuman said, 'O Rama, in Thee I have taken refuge; bless me, that I may have pure Bhakti to Thy lotus-feet, and further, that I may not be blinded by Thy world-deluding Maya.'

"A frog, when pierced unknowingly by the arrow of Rama, said, 'When I am caught by a snake I cry to Thee, saying, "O Rama, save me;" but now that I am pierced by the arrow of Rama Himself, I am keeping quiet.'

"Formerly, I used to have vivid visions—with these eyes—just as I am seeing you; now, I get visions only in trance.

"After God-realisation one has the nature of a child. One approximates the nature of the being one meditates upon. God's nature is just like a child's. A child plays at house-keeping—now builds her doll-house—now breaks it: He is also doing the same in Creation, Protection and Destruction. As a child is not bound by any quality, so He is beyond all the three *gunas*, Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas.

“Hence you see Paramahamsas keep some children around them that they may assume their nature.”

From Agarpara a young man, twenty-two years of age, has come to the Master. Only recently he began coming to the place. When he comes, he calls the Master aside and whispers out his mind to him. To-day he sits on the floor near the Master.

Sri Ramakrishna: (to the young man) Through imitation a change comes over one's nature. By adopting the feminine mood, passions and lust are annihilated. The mode of conduct becomes exactly like that of a woman. Those who take female parts in a drama behave, I have marked, while they are bathing, exactly like women,—they cleanse their teeth and speak like women.

“You come on any Tuesday or Saturday.

(To Prankrishna) “Brahman and Shakti, are inseparable. If you do not accept Shakti, the whole world becomes false,—you, I, the house, the family, everything becomes non-existent. Because of Shakti, the whole creation exists. If there be no supporting side-poles, no framework can be made, nor can there be the beautiful image of Durga on it.

“Unless one gives up the worldly propensities, there never comes the true awakening, nor the God-realisation. Worldly propen-

Truthfulness
and sincerity.

sities beget only hypocrisy and duplicity. He cannot be attained save by simplicity of heart.

"Let thee have such Bhakti within thy heart, and give up all cunning and deceit ;

"Have devotion, service and resignation, and easily shalt thou reach the Chief of the Raghus."

"Those who are engaged in business, such as work in the office or trade, should stick also to the truth. Truthfulness is the *tabasya* of this age of Kali."

Prana: It is said in the *Mahanirvana Tantra*: 'O Great Goddess, they should abide by this Dharma, being truthful, self-controlled, ever engaged in doing good to others, unperturbed and magnanimous.'

Sri Ramakrishna: Yes, all those things are to be fully comprehended and borne in mind always.

III.

The Master has now seated himself on the small cot in his room, and is still in the Bhava. Constantly he is in that mood. He is now looking at Rakhal with the eye of that Bhava (*Bhava Chakshu*) and is being filled with the tender feeling of paternal love; and there is horripilation on the body.

Even while looking at him he enters into Samadhi and all the devotees assembled in the room are beholding this Bhava state of the Master in speechless wonderment. Coming down to the natural state, the Master observes,

Gradations of
God-realisation.

“Do you know, there comes an awakening at the sight of Rakhal? The more you advance towards God, the more you will find His attributive grandeur lessening. The first vision a Sadhaka gets is of the ten-handed being (Durga)—in the form of the Supreme Mistress of the Universe. In that form there is a great expression of power and grandeur. Next, She appears in the two-handed form,—then no more are there the ten hands with all their respective weapons. Next comes the vision of the Gopal form,—then there is absolutely no expression of power and grandeur,—it is simply the form of a tender child. There is a vision even superior to this,—the vision of the Effulgent Light.

“After realising God, and the attainment of Samadhi one feels no necessity of *Jnana Vichara* (the self-discrimination of knowledge). *Jnana Vichara* is only possible so long as there is the perception of multiplicity—so long as one has the consciousness of ‘I,’ ‘thou,’ the world, the Jiva, etc. When the real knowledge of the absolute unity dawns, perfect quietude comes to the man. This was the case with Trilinga Swami.

“Have you not noticed it at a feast? At first you hear a good deal of noise, but the more the dishes are served to the guests and their hunger is appeased, the less becomes the noise; and when the last course of curd and

sweets is served, then you hear no other noise but that of gentle 'soop,' 'sap.' Next comes sleep,—Samadhi. Then there is absolutely no noise.

(To M. and Prana.) "There are many who speak of Brahma-jnana, but they themselves remain constantly occupied with lower things, such as house, money, name, sense-enjoyments, etc. So long as you remain down at the foot of the monument, you see only the pedestrians, the equipages, the houses, etc., but when you ascend to the top of it, you notice only one expansive sky, unrolling the infinity; then you find no satisfaction with those things below—they appear like mean, crawling insects.

"When there dawns the real knowledge of Brahman, all attachment for the world, all pleasure in woman and wealth, disappears.

There comes then a perfect cessation of all these (passions). While burning, wood makes a crackling noise, but when it is wholly burnt and reduced to ashes, no more do you hear the sound. With the destruction of attachment the keenness of the thirst (for pleasure) also disappears: finally comes Peace.

"The more you approach God, the more you will find Peace—Peace, Peace, Supreme Peace. The nearer you go to the Ganges, the greater you will feel the coolness—still cooler will you feel on bathing.

“But Jiva, Jagat and all the twenty-four principles exist simply because He *is*. Nothing remains, if you eliminate Him. When you put zeros only after one, it increases the value; but delete the one and the zeros will have no value.”

Perhaps to show his grace to Prankrishna, the Master now hints at his own state.

Sri Ramakrishna: Yet, there are some who come down and remain with ‘the ego of Knowledge,’ or ‘the ego of devotion,’ even after the attainment of Brahma-jnana and Samadhi. Even when the market is over, some remain in the market of their own accord, such as Narada and others. They remain with ‘the ego of Bhakti’ to teach mankind. Sankaracharya kept his ‘ego of knowledge’ to teach humanity.

“He can never be attained if there be even a little of attachment. Thread can never pass through the eye of a needle if there be even the least protruding fibre.

“The passion and anger of one who has attained God remain but in name, in appearance only; just as a burnt rope, though it has the appearance of a rope, is easily blown away by a puff.

“When the mind becomes free from all attachments, it attains His vision. Whatever appears in the pure mind is His message.

What is pure mind is the same as pure intellect, and that again is the same as pure Atman: for there is nothing truly pure except the Lord.

"But attaining to Him, one transcends both Dharma and Adharma (virtue and vice)."

With these words he begins to sing in his inimitable voice the following song of Ramaprasad:

"Come, let us take a stroll, O mind.

"There, under the wish-yielding tree of Kali, wilt thou get four fruits.

"Of thy two consorts, Passion and Dispassion, take Dispassion with thee;

"And truth thou shouldst ask of her son, the Righteous Discrimination.

"The goats of Dharma and Adharma keep thee tied down to the stakes of Insignificance:

"If they be not amenable, sacrifice them with thy sword of Knowledge."

IV.

The Master has come out and seated himself in the south-eastern veranda. Prankrishna and other devotees have come out with him. Hazra Mahashay is also sitting in the veranda. The Master jocosely remarks to Prankrishna, "Well, don't you reckon Hazra as a small fry. If here is the *Bara Dargah**, he is the *Chhoti Dargah*." All enjoy the joke with hearty laughter. A certain gentleman, Navakumar by name, comes and stands by the door, but on seeing the devotees sitting there, he retires quickly. The Master observes,

* Dargah: is a sepulchre of a Mohammedan saint and a place of worship.

“O egoism incarnate!” It is now half-past nine in the morning; Prankrishna stands up after due obeisance and takes leave to return to Calcutta.

A minstrel is singing some devotional songs inside the room of the Master and he is listening to it attentively. Just then Srijukta Kedar Chatterjee enters and prostrates to the Master. He has come in his full office dress—with long coat and trousers on. However, any talk about God opens a flood-gate of tears in his eyes. He possesses a great devout heart, and fosters within himself the Bhava of the Gopis.

The sight of Kedar recalls all on a sudden the Brindavan Leela to the mind of the Master; and, filled with emotion, he stands up and sings—

“Dear, how far is the forest where resides my beloved Shyama-sundara,—lo, I am too tired to walk any more!”

While singing in the Bhava of Radha, the Master falls into Samadhi,—he is standing erect, motionless, like a picture,—only tears of ecstasy trickle down the two corners of his eyes.

Kedar kneels down touching the feet of the Master and chants :

“We worship the Great Intelligence Who is equanimous, pure, residing within the lotus of the heart; the object of knowledge even for Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva; attainable by the

Yogis through meditation; the destroyer of the fear of birth and death; the seed of all worlds; the One Whose real nature is existence and intelligence absolute."

After a while, Sri Ramakrishna comes down to his normal consciousness.

Kedar has come to Dakshineswar on his way from his home at Halisahar to his place of business in Calcutta. So, taking a little rest and seeing the Master, he goes away.

Thus the forenoon is passed in conversation with the devotees. Srijukta Ramlal (Master's nephew) then brings in in a dish some *prasad* of the Divine Mother Kali for the Master, and spreads it before a seat; the Master sits there and takes the Prasad. Even his eating is like that of a child. He puts into his mouth a small portion of everything. After the meal he goes and sits on his little cot and rests awhile.

V.

It is now 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Some Marwari devotees have come and seated themselves on the floor of the room; there are also M. Rakhal and other devotees inside.

A Marwari devotee: Sir, what is the way?

Sri Ramakrishna: There are two paths,—one is that of *Vichara* (Self-discrimination) and the other is that of devotion (*Bhakti*). The discrimination is of the *Real* from the *non-real*—God alone is the real, the eternal, and all else

is non-real and non-eternal. The juggler alone is real, and not his Jugglery. This is called the path of discrimination.

“Viveka and Vairagya go together. Viveka means the sifting of the real from the non-real. And Vairagya means dispassion towards the objects of the world. This does not come all on a sudden; it has to be practised daily. Kamini and Kanchana have to be renounced first mentally,—subsequently, God willing, they should be renounced internally as well as externally. It is not possible to say to the people of Calcutta that everything should be renounced completely for the Lord,—so I tell them, ‘First renounce mentally.’

“By Abhyasa Yoga (continuous practice of meditation) the dispassion for Kamini and Kanchana is awakened; so has it been said in the Gita also. Continuous practice brings an extraordinary power to the mind; then none feels any difficulty in subjugating the senses, passion and lust. It is like a tortoise that never extends its limbs, once it has drawn them in. Even though you cut it into pieces, it would never extend them.”

Devotee: Sir, you spoke just now of two paths; what is the other path?

Sri Ramakrishna: The other is the path of Bhakti or extreme devotion to God. Weep, cry for him; in solitude and secretly, cry for His revelation. ‘Let thee cry, O mind, the proper cry, and then see if Shyama can remain without appearing.’

Devotee: Sir, what is the significance of the worship of God with form, and what is the meaning again of the formless, the Absolute?

Sri Ramakrishna: As the photograph of your father reminds you of him, so the worship of the image reveals to us, in course of time, the true form of God.

"Do you know what this *Sakara* of God is like? It is like the rising of bubbles on a sheet of water. It can be actually seen that the different forms are rising from the *Chidakasa*. The Divine Incarnation is one of the forms. The *Avatara Leela* is also a play of the same Primal Energy (*Adyashakti*).

"What is there, after all, in dry scholarship? He is attained quickly, if one only pants for Him. There is no need of knowing many things.

"He who is a teacher has to know many things. You require sword and shield, if you want to kill others; but to kill your own self, a needle or a small knife is sufficient.

"When we proceed to realise our real being, we get *Him* only as the last result of our analysis. What

Vichara vs. Bhakti. is my being—is it the flesh, or the bones, or blood, or marrow,—the mind or the intellect? The ultimate analysis reveals that I am none of these. "*Neti, Neti*" (not-this, not this.) The Atma cannot be perceived nor touched. He is attributeless, absolute.

“But according to the doctrine of Bhakti He is full of blessed attributes. *Chinmaya Shyama, Chinmaya Dhama**—all are made of Chit.”

The Marwari devotees after prostrating before the Master take their leave and go away.

It has become evening now and Sri Ramakrishna is looking at the Ganges. The lamp is lighted in the room; he returns and sits on his little cot and abandons himself to the thought of the Divine Mother.

* God is spirit and His abode also is spiritual.

CHAPTER VI

THE DAKSHINESWAR TEMPLE,—FEBRUARY, 1883

The noonday meal being over, Sri Ramakrishna is engaged in conversation with the devotees in his well-known chamber. It is the 25th of February of the year 1883.

Rakhal, Harish, Latoo, and Hazrah are living at the Temple Garden in the constant company of the Master. Ram, Kedar, Nityagopal, M. and a few others, including a Mr. Chaudhury, have come to visit the Master.

Mr. Chaudhury has lately lost his wife, and to console his mind, has been paying a few visits to the Master. He has passed several examinations at the University and is employed in Government service.

Sri Ramakrishna: (to Ram and others) Rakhal, Narendra, and Bhavanath are *Nitya-siddhas* ('Ever-perfect') — 'wide awake' from their very birth. And it is only for imparting spiritual education to man that they have assumed the human body.

"There is another class of devotees called the *kripa-siddhas**. The grace of the Lord suddenly descends on them and they at once attain the Divine Vision and the Knowledge Divine, even as a room

* ' Perfected through Divine Grace.'

that has been dark for hundreds of years becomes illumined the moment a light is brought into it, and not by degrees.

“Those who live in the world must practise Sadhana. They must repair to solitude and earnestly pray for His vision.

(To Chaudhury)“ He, the Lord cannot be realised through scholarship. Who, indeed, can understand Him by reasoning?— Let us all try our best to have devotion to His lotus-feet.

“Infinite is His glory,—Who can conceive it? Who, again, can understand His inscrutable ways?

“Bhishmadeva was one of the eight Vasus—even he shed tears on his bed of arrows! He said, ‘Behold, the Lord Himself is ever with the Pandavas, yet they have no end of suffering! Who can fathom His ways?’

“Some there are who think that by little Sadhana they have practised, they have surpassed other people. But triumph and defeat are in His hands. I have seen a prostitute expiring here in the Ganges, retaining her consciousness to the very last moment.*”

God, the
Supreme
Dispenser.

Chaudhury: How can I see Him?

Sri Ramakrishna: Not with these eyes! Only when He vouchsafes you the spiritual eye

* It is considered by the Hindus to be an act of great spiritual merit to die in this way in the Ganges.

can you have His vision. Before Arjuna could perceive the Universal Form of the Lord, the Lord gave him the spiritual sight.

"Your philosophy only speculates and reasons. But you cannot find Him that way.

"If you have the devotion of love, that is to say, a devotion which is actuated by motives of love and self surrender then He cannot remain unmoved.

"Do you know how very fond of devotion He is?—Just as the cow
Reasonless Love, is fond of the straw which is seasoned with oil-cake and which it devours greedily.

"This Love-devotion is pure devotion and is reasonless. Prahlad had it.

"It is as if you were to visit a rich man daily, though you do not expect to get anything by it,—only because you love to see him; and you say, when asked, 'No, sir, I want nothing, I have come only to see you.' This is Reasonless Devotion; you desire nothing from God, you simply love Him!"

Saying so, the Master begins to sing:

"I mind not, O I mind not to give thee Salvation. But Love;—It is hard to give. Whoever gets it excels all and claims triumphantly the homage of the worlds !

"I'll tell thee the secret of love, O Chandravali ; it is rarer than Salvation ! And forever it binds at Bali's door, down in the nether worlds !

"In Brindavan alone it is found, and none know it but the Gopas and Gopis. Verily for this Love, I carry the loads of Nanda as his obedient son !"

Sri Ramakrishna: The essential thing is that one should have devotion of Love for the Lord, and discrimination and dispassion.

Chaudhury: Sir, can I not do without a Guru?

Sri Ramakrishna: Satchidananda, God Himself, is Guru.

"When at the end of the *Shava-sadhana*, the Sadhaka realises his *Ishtam*, the Guru appears before him and says, 'Look, here is your Ishtam. He who is the Guru is also the Ishtam and he gives the clue to His realisation.

"They perform the *Anantavrata*, but it is Vishnu they really worship; the idea is that in Him are contained all the forms of God.

To Ram and others; "If you ask which form of the Lord you should meditate on, I say, meditate upon any form you like, but know that all are one.

Synthesis of
religions.

"Never be intolerant of any of the Divine forms. Siva, Kali, Hari—all these are merely different manifestations of the One; and blessed indeed is he who has known all as one.

"'In appearance he is a Saiva, but within his heart is Kali, and he utters, Haribol! Haribol!'

"The body cannot last if lust, anger and other passions become totally extinct. So try only to minimise them."

Referring to Kedar, the Master says,

"He is very nice. He believes in the Absolute and also in the relative aspect of

God: He is a believer both in Brahman and Its god-manifestations and human incarnations."

For Kedar declares that our Master is God Himself incarnated in a human body.

The Master then refers to Nityagopal saying to the devotees that his spiritual condition is very beautiful, and then continues:—

(To Nityagopal) "Don't you go there often; go only on rare occasions.

^{Regulations of}
^a Sannyasin's ^{life.} You must be careful, for though she may be a devotee, she is woman!

"Very strict are the regulations of the life of a Sannyasin. He must not look at a woman even in a picture! This does not apply to the householder.

"Even if a woman is a great devotee, a man should not associate with her.

"And though a Tyagi* may have complete self-control, as an example to society he must observe all these restrictions.

"The life of perfect renunciation led by the Sannyasin will teach others to renounce. If he falters they also will be degraded. For the Sannyasin is the teacher of the world."

Now the Master and the devotees go out and walk about. M. stands before the picture of Prahlada, looking intently at it, for as the Master has said, he is an example of Reasonless Love!

* A man who has renounced the world.

CHAPTER VII

THE DAKSHINESWAR TEMPLE,—MARCH, 1883

I

Sunday, the 11th of March, 1883, being the second day of the bright fortnight of the month of *Phalguna*, the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna are celebrating the anniversary of his birthday in the Temple of Dakshineswar.

It is the season of spring — trees and creepers have put forth new leaves. The morning service is just finished in the temples. The musicians are playing their sweet morning tunes in the *Nahavat*. The thought of the Master's holy nativity has set a-flutter the hearts of the devotees, and the very air seems surcharged with bliss.

The devotees are assembling in the Temple by groups. When M. arrives, though it is yet early morning, he finds the Master conversing smilingly with Rakhal, Bhavanath and the latter's friend, Kali-Krishna, in the eastern veranda. M. prostrates himself before the Master.

Sri Ramakrishna: (to M.) So you are come! (To the devotees) 'God cometh not where shyness, hatred and fear reign.' Immense will be the joy to-day; but those who will not sing and dance in the intoxication of

the Lord's name will never realise God. Why should one be afraid or feel shy to take the name of God? Now sing.

Bhavanath and his friend Kali-Krishna sing :

"Blessed, oh thrice blessed, is this day of joy! We have united to spread Thy true religion over all Ind, O Lord!

"Every heart Thou hast made Thy abode and every corner Thy holy name hath filled. Lo! Thy devotees sing Thy praise!

"Wealth, progeny or fame we seek not; naught else but Thee do we desire. Thee only Thy eager people seek, O Lord;

"We have taken refuge in Thy blessed feet, O Lord; why should we fear danger or death? Behold, the mine of immortal bliss is at hand,—Oh blessed, blessed be Thy name!"

The Master is sitting with folded hands, listening intently to the song, his whole mind lifted to the region of the Divine; and he remains long immersed in meditation. The mind of the Master is like unto a dry match which strikes fire at the very first rubbing. But the mind of the ordinary man, polluted with worldliness, is like a damp match which does not strike fire even if it be rubbed a thousand times.

A little while after, Kali-Krishna whispers something to Bhavanath, and, after saluting the Master, rises to depart. Sri Ramakrishna asks in astonishment, "Where are you going?"

Bhavanath: (to the Master) Sir, he is going on a little business.

Sri Ramakrishna: What business?

Bhava: He is going to attend the Baranagore Working-men's Institute.

Kalikrishna departs..

Sri Ramakrishna: How unlucky! To-day he could enjoy so much the bliss of the Lord's name,—but it is not in his lot!

II.

It is nearly nine in the morning. The Master is slightly indisposed and therefore abstains from taking his usual ablution in the Ganges. The disciples draw a few jars of water and bathe him in the south-eastern veranda. He requires a pot of water to be set aside, which he afterwards pours on his head.

After bathing, *Sri Ramakrishna* sweetly recites the holy names of the Lord, and, having put on a pure cloth, walks across the metalled quadrangle towards the Kali temple. The Lord's names cease not on his hallowed lips, and his eyes wear an aimless look, even like those of a bird when it hatches its eggs. At the temple, the Master salutes and worships the Mother; but his worship has no method,—now he offers scent and flowers at Her feet, now on his own head. At last he touches the offered flowers to his forehead and asks Bhavanath to follow him with a green cocoanut which has been offered to the Mother.

On his way back the Master visits the Radhakanta temple, or 'Vishnughar,' as he calls it, which stands on his right, and bows to the ground at the sight of the sacred

images of the Divine Lovers*. On his left stand the twelve temples of Siva,—Him, too he salutes from a distance.

When the Master reaches his room, he finds Ram, Nityagopal, Kedar Chatterjee and other devotees already assembled there. They make their obeisance to him and are welcomed with queries about their welfare. To one of them, who is about twenty-four years old and yet unmarried, the Master turns and inquires, "Will you eat anything?" "Yes," he replies, in a child-like tone. He lives always in the region of divine moods, visiting Sri Ramakrishna alone or in the company of Ram, and is much beloved by him on account of his high spiritual state which the master often designates as that of the Paramahansa.

After the devotee has taken refreshments, the Master leads him to the western porch beside the Ganges and talks to him.

Sri Ramakrishna: Do you go there?

Devotee: (in a child-like tone) Yes, I do. She takes me.

Sri Ramakrishna: Beware, O Sadhu! Visit her cautiously and not often, lest you should fall. Woman and gold,—even these are Maya, and a Sadhu has to be far off from woman. All lose themselves there, and even Brahma

The safeguards
of a Sadhu's
life.

* Radha and Krishna.

and Vishnu are struggling helplessly in that disastrous whirlpool!

The devotee listens with rapt attention.

The talk has reference to a lady about twenty-three years old, who is much devoted to the Master and often visits him. On seeing the rare spiritual manifestations of the devotee she has learnt to love him as a son and often invites him to her house.

M: (aside) How strange! The Master often affirms that this devotee has reached the stage of the Paramahansa,—why does he then apprehend any danger for him? Oh, what a rigorous discipline he imposes on Sadhus! He fears that too much familiarity with women may drag them down from their exalted spirituality. And, indeed, unless this high ideal is maintained in all its purity, how can ordinary individuals aspire for salvation? The lady is very devout, and yet he is afraid. I see now why Sri Chaitanya laid such a heavy punishment on his disciple, Chhota Haridas; being a sannyasin he spoke to a widow devotee against the injunctions of his master, for which Sri Chaitanya renounced him for good. How rigorous these disciplines of the Sannyasin's life! But how deeply Sri Ramakrishna loves this devotee! Else why should he warn him against any possible danger that may assail him in the future?...

"Beware, O Sadhu!"...The devotees hear this solemn warning, and are hushed in awful silence.

III.

Sri Ramakrishna comes to the north-eastern veranda. Amongst the devotees present there is a resident of Dakshineswar who is a student of the Vedanta. He is discussing the doctrine of the Logos with S^j. Kedar Chatterjee.

Resident: The Eternal Word is ever vibrating within and without.

Sri Ramakrishna: But the Word alone will not do, there must be a Substance corresponding to it. Can your name alone give me pleasure? I cannot have it in full measure till I see you.

Resident: That Word, that Eternal Word itself is Brahman.

Sri Ramakrishna: (to Kedar) Oh! do you see? His is the doctrine of the Rishis. They said to Ramachandra, 'We know you, O Rama, as the son of Dasaratha. Bharadwaja and other Rishis may worship you as the Divine Incarnation, but we seek the Absolute, the Akhanda Satchidananda.' At this Rama smiled and passed on.

Kedar: These Rishis could not recognise him as the Avatar—they were fools.

Sri Ramakrishna: (solemnly) Don't you say so! People take to things according to their taste and capacity of digestion, so to speak.

The mother dresses the same fish differently for different children. For one she prepares *polao*, but the *polao* may not agree with the others, so she makes soup of it. There are again other tastes. Some relish fried fish, and others acid preparations. [All laugh.]

Harmony of religions.

“The Rishis were philosophical, hence they sought to realise God as the Absolute, the Akhanda Satchidananda. But Bhaktas want the Divine Incarnation so that they may enjoy the sweetness of Bhakti. The sight of Him dispels the darkness of the mind. It is written in the Puranas that when Ramachandra entered the assembly hall a hundred suns, as it were, shone out! Why then did the courtiers not get scorched? The reply is, his light is not a material light: it brought into bloom the lotus-hearts of all who were in the hall, even as the lotus blossoms when the sun rises!”

The Master is standing as he speaks. The last words are scarcely out of his lips when his whole mind is drawn inside, and he loses himself in Samadhi.

Has the lotus of his heart opened its petals to the divine vision of the Lord? He stands motionless, completely lost to the external world, like a figure on canvas. But his countenance is lit with a divine light, and is smiling. And the devotees feast their eyes in speechless

wonder upon this blessed vision of the kingdom of love, this beatific state of Samadhi.

After, a long time he comes down from the superconscious plane. He heaves a deep sigh and repeats the name of Rama, and every word rains nectar. He then sits down surrounded by the devotees who are intently looking at him.

Sri Ramakrishna : When an Avatar comes, the average man does not know him. He

comes in secret and only a few Antaranga disciples recognise him. That Rama was

Brahman Himself, and the perfect Divine Incarnation, was known only to twelve Rishis; others looked upon him merely as the son of Dasaratha.

“Can every one realise the Absolute? But his is the perfect devotion, who, having realised God as the Absolute, remains in the relative plane to enjoy the Divine Leela. Only after visiting the Queen in England can you rightly talk of her ways and manners, then only will your story of the Queen be correct. Bharadwaja and other Rishis prayed to Rama : ‘Thou art, O Rama, verily the Absolute Brahman incarnated before us as man; and Thou appearest as human, because Thou hast shrouded Thyself with Thy Maya.’ These Rishis were extremely devoted to Rama and theirs was perfect devotion.”

IV.

In speechless wonder, the devotees listen to the revelation of the mystery of Divine Incarnation? And some of them think, 'Strange it is. The Absolute Brahman, Whom the Vedas declare as beyond speech and mind, appears before us as a man, three and a half cubits high! But it must be so, since Sri Ramakrishna himself says it. Had it been otherwise, why should the very utterance of the name of Rama plunge this great soul into Samadhi? Verily he was enjoying the divine beauty of Rama in the lotus of his heart.'

In a short time, Manomohan and Navai, with a party from Konnagore, enter the Temple Garden, chanting the praise of the Lord. When they arrive at the north eastern veranda the Master joins them and sings and dances in the intoxication of divine love.

When in the joy of the singing, his mind soars into Samadhi and the devotees decorate him with large flower garlands, he looks verily like Sri Gauranga lost in the depths of Samadhi. For, like him, our Master also manifests the three different states of consciousness: sometimes he is in the *internal mood*, completely unconscious of the external world, and appears like a stock or a stone; sometimes, again, he is in the *semi-external mood*, when, filled with divine love, he dances; and at other times.

he has the *external mood*, in which he sings the praise of the Lord with the devotees.

The Master stands facing towards the west, his mind uplifted to the superconscious plane. A devotee is supporting him that he may not fall down. And others surrounding him are singing the glory of God to the sound of Khols and cymbals. His eyes see not; but his countenance—the very image of the moon—is suffused with love divine, and the devotees look on unsatiated, drinking in the celestial beauty of that blissful image.

The day has advanced. The Master has come down to the plane of normal consciousness. And the holy chant has now ceased. After a short rest, Sri Ramakrishna puts on a new yellow-coloured cloth and sits on his small cot. The devotees find no end to the heart-gladdening, lustrous and sublime beauty of this blissful great soul,—a beauty which is pure, and rare even amongst gods, and, withal, supremely fascinating. Verily there is no end to this.

V.

The noonday meal is over and Sri Ramakrishna is taking his rest on the small cot. The crowd in his room is gradually growing and has overflowed into the verandas. Kedar, Suresh, Ram, Manomohan, Girindra, Bhavanath, M. Rakhai and many other devotees are seated on the floor, gazing constantly

at the Master. Rakhal's father is sitting among them and also a Vaishnava Goswami, to whom the Master is addressing his words. Our Master would always bow down before the Goswamis and even prostrate himself sometimes.

Sri Ramakrishna: Well, what do you say—what is the way?

Goswami: His Name alone will do. | The Holy Name is very effective in this Kali Yuga.

Sri Ramakrishna: Yes, no doubt the Holy Name is very effective; but is it sufficient without love? The soul must hunger for God. What will it avail that I repeat His name, if my mind is attached to Kamini-Kanchana? Merely muttering magic incantations will not heal a scorpion or a spider bite. You must also apply the smoke of burning cow-dung*.

Goswami: What about Ajamil then?
Ajamil was a great sinner; there was no sin he did not commit. But only because in his dying hour he called his son by his name of 'Narayana' was he saved.

Sri Ramakrishna: Perchance he had accumulated great merit in his previous birth. Besides, it is said that he practised penance afterwards.

* The Master here mentions a simple recipe of the village housewife for scorpion bite.

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“You may also explain it thus: Those were Ajamil’s last moments. An elephant besmears his body with dust and mud immediately after his bath. But the elephant remains clean after the bath if his keeper puts him into the stall at once.

“Man becomes purged of his sins at once by uttering His name. But the next moment he takes to various sinful acts,—he has not enough strength of mind to vow that he will never more commit any sin. Ablution in the Ganges takes away all sins, but little does it avail. The story goes that the sins lie in ambush in the trees on the river bank, so that when the man returns from his bath, those old sins may jump down on his shoulders. [All laugh.] So you see, before he has proceeded but a few steps, they are on him again,—they have possessed him.

“Therefore always take the name of the Lord, but pray to Him at the same time that you may attain love for Him, and that your attachment for money, fame and physical comforts, which are but transient, may grow less and less.

“If one is earnest and sincere, any religion can take him to God. The Vaishnavas, the Shaktas, the Vedantins, and the Brahmanjanis,—all will equally attain to God. And so again the Mussalmans and the Christians. Yes, every one will reach the Lord, if he is

sincere. Some there are who quarrel, saying, 'There is no hope for you unless you worship our Sri Krishna,' 'There is no hope for you unless you worship our Mother Kali,' or 'There is no hope for you unless you accept Christianity.'

"To say that one's religion alone is true and that others are false is dogmatism. And it is a bad attitude. For, various are the ways that lead unto the Lord!

All religions
are true.

"Some again maintain that God has form,—that He cannot be formless. And they quarrel about it. A Vaishnava quarrels with an Advaitin.

"One can speak of Him with authority only when he has seen Him. And he who has seen Him well knows that He is both with and without form, and very much more than can be expressed in words.

"Once some blind men happened to come upon what they were told was an elephant. They were asked what they thought it was like. So they began to feel the animal with their hands, and one of them said it was like a pillar,—he had felt only a leg. 'It is like a winnowing fan,' said another, for he had felt one of its ears only! And others again who had felt its trunk or stomach spoke of it in different ways. Even so he who has seen the Lord knows only of that aspect of Him that

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he has seen, and he thinks, 'Such is God and nothing else.'

"Once a man came to his friends and said, 'Halloo I saw a beautiful red chameleon under that tree.' 'Why red?' exclaimed one of them, 'I myself was there before you; I found it green.' Then rejoined another, 'I know full well it is neither red nor green. I was there before you both and saw with my own eyes that it is blue.' At that some others asserted that it was yellow or brown, and so on till they fell out and every one insisted that he alone was right. Some one came by and enquired what the quarrel was about. When the cause of their dispute was told him, he said, 'Lo, I myself live under that very tree and I know the animal well. All of you are right; it is indeed sometimes red, sometimes green, at other times blue and so on. And I have found that sometimes it has no colour at all.'

(To the Goswami) "So how can you say that He is only 'Sakara'? True, He incarnates Himself in a human body as Sri Krishna, and He appears before His devotees in various forms. But it is also true that He is a Nirakara Akhanda Satchidananda. The Vedas have declared that He is both with and without form, both with and without attributes.

"Do you know what it is like? The Absolute may be compared to an infinite ocean;

and as extreme cold freezes the waters of the ocean into ice and sets it afloat in masses of various forms, so under the cooling influence, so to say, of Bhakti, the Infinite reduces Himself to the finite and appears before His devotees as a Being with form. The Bhakta loves to see Him with form. Again, when the Sun of knowledge shines forth, these divine forms like masses of ice melt away, and nothing but water remains,—water above, below and around, water everywhere as before. Hence there is this prayer in the Srimad Bhagavatam, ‘Thou art, O Lord, both Sakara* and Nirakara.† Thou art indeed appearing before us as a man, but the Vedas have declared Thee as beyond speech and mind.’

“But then, you may truly say that for some He is eternally Sakara. There are places where the ice never melts,—it becomes crystal.”

Kedar: In the Bhagavatam, Vyasa sought forgiveness of God for three transgressions. In one passage he says, ‘O Lord, *Thou art beyond speech and mind. But I have narrated Thy Leela and spoken of Thy forms only,—for this forgive me.’

Sri Ramakrishna: Yes, God is indeed both Sakara and Nirakara. Of Him, none can find any end.

VI.

Rakhal’s father is sitting amongst the devotees. After the decease of Rakhal’s mother

* ‘Sakara’ =with form,† ‘Nirakara’=without form.

he married again. He comes to Dakshineswar from time to time to inquire after his son, who has been staying there with the Master; and he is not much opposed to this arrangement. He is a rich man, owning many lands, and is always involved in litigation. He therefore finds it profitable to pay occasional visits to the temple, where he can meet many lawyers and magistrates amongst the visitors to Sri Ramakrishna and be benefited by their valuable worldly counsels.

The Master is casting occasional glance at him. He earnestly desires that Rakhal should be allowed to remain permanently with him at Dakshineswar. He says,

“Ah! how beautiful Rakhal's nature has become now. Look at him; you will find, his lips are quivering now and then,—he is inwardly repeating the name of the Lord.

“These boys belong to the class of the Ever-perfect. Knowledge of God is innate in them, and when they become a little older they feel how dangerous it is to come in contact with the world. The Vedas tell the story of the ‘Homa’ bird

The nature of
the Ever-perfect.

which ever lives and soars in the highest regions of the heavens and never descends to the earth. When it lays its egg, the egg falls down and keeps falling and falling and is hatched in its descent. And the fledgling comes out and goes on

falling, until it grows its wings and opens its eyes and discovers that it will fall on the earth and die. Therefore the moment it sights the earth it soars upward, and up and up it goes till it reaches its mother. Its one aim is to reach its mother.

“These boys are indeed of the same type; even from childhood, they are afraid of the world, and their one thought is how to go back to the Mother, how to realise God.

“You may argue, ‘Being born of worldly parents and living amongst the worldly-minded how can they possess so much Bhakti and Jnana?’ It can be explained in this way: A gram seed produces nothing but gram, even if it be sown on a dirty spot. And that gram can serve various useful purposes. Would it produce another kind of plant because it was sown on a dirty spot?

“Rakhāl’s nature has become beautiful now a days. And why should it not be so? If a yam is good, its shoots also become good. [All laugh.] As is the father, so is the son.”

M.: (aside to Girindra) How nicely he explained the relation of Sakara and Nirakara! The Vaishnavas insist on Sakara alone: is it not so?

Girindra: I know. They are one-sided.

M.: Did you understand what he said about ‘Eternal Form’ and ‘crystal’? I could not thoroughly grasp it.

Sri Ramakrishna: (to M.) Halloo, what are you talking about?

M. and Girindra smile and observe silence.

*Brinda**: (to Ramlal) O Ramlal, first give this man his meal; you may give me mine afterwards.

Sri Ramakrishna: Has 'he not yet given Brinda's meal to her?

VII.

It is afternoon. Devotees are singing the praise of the Mother in the Panchavati. The Master has joined them,—his joy to-day knows no bounds. They sing:

"My mind was hovering like a kite in the firmament of Mother's hallowed feet, when came a gust of sin's foul wind and struck it down to earth.

"Maya disturbed its even balance by drawing down one side and I could fly the kite no more. It became entangled in the string of love for wife and children and was rent in twain.

"It lost its crest of knowledge and reeled down when I flew it up. How could it fly, indeed, deprived of its head? Its six companions †therefore won the race.

"It wore the ties of Love of its free will; but when the play began it lost its head. Nareshchandra rues this game of smiles and tears; it were better, he thinks, had he not come at all."

Again:

"The bee of my mind has lost itself in the blue lotus of Shyama's blessed feet; lo, it has lost itself in the blue lotus of Kali's hallowed feet!

"The world's sweets that dwell in the bosom of Desire's flowers can no more allure it with their false charms.

"The golden bee of my heart has lost itself at the feet of the Mother—like has mingled with like! and five principles ‡ and Prakriti have fled!

* She was a maid-servant of the Temple.

† The six passions,—lust, anger, greed, infatuation, vanity and jealousy.

‡ Five principles,—earth, water, fire, air and ether.

"Kamalakanta's hopes are realised at last. What cares he for weal or woe, now that the sea of his joy is heaving high?"

And they sing:

"My Mother has made a nice machine, barely five feet high. She displays infinite beautiful tricks with this little device.

"She sits hidden in the heart of the toy, pulling the leading string. The toy plays and dances and thinks, it acts of its own free will; knows not who pulls the string!

"The machine that has known Her ceases to be a machine. Lo, some machines there are that bind the Mother Herself with the string of their love!

Great is the joy of the devotees. When there is a little pause in the singing, Sri Ramakrishna rises and walks towards his room with M., where many devotees are still lingering. When he comes to the Bakultala, Trailokya meets and salutes him.

Sri Ramakrishna: They are singing at Panchavati. Will you not go there?

Trailokya: What is the use?

Sri Ramakrishna: Why, you may enjoy it.

Trailokya: I have been there already.

Sri Ramakrishna: All right.

VIII.

It is nearly six in the evening. The Master is seated in the south-eastern veranda with the devotees.

Sri Ramakrishna: A Sadhu that has renounced the world will of course take the name of the Lord, for he has nothing else to do. If he always thinks of God, there is nothing astonishing in it. On the other hand, if he fails to think of God and take His

name, there is every chance of people condemning him.

“But if a man of the world takes the name of the Lord, it is certainly a great credit. King Janaka was a very clever man. He wielded two swords at a time—the sword of knowledge and the sword of action. He possessed the fulness of the knowledge of God and at the same time attended to the duties of the world.

“An unchaste woman attends minutely to all the details of her household work, but her mind is ever fixed on her secret lover.

“Always keep the company of the Sadhus; they can introduce you to God.”

Kedar: Yes, sir, the Great Ones come for the salvation of men, just as a locomotive engine draws and takes along with it a long train of carriages, or as a lake or river quenches the thirst of countless animals.

The devotees are now preparing to return home. They salute Sri Ramakrishna, bowing to the ground and take the dust of his sacred feet. When Bhavanath approaches, the Master says, “Do not go to-day. The very sight of you is inspiring.”

And Bhavanath, a fair-complexioned, handsome youth, about twenty years old, has not yet entered the world. The very mention of the name of the Lord brings tears into his eyes, and Sri Ramakrishna looks upon him as the very embodiment of Narayana.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DAKSHINESWAR TEMPLE,—MARCH, 1883

It is Thursday, the 29th of March, 1883, and the hour of Sri Ramakrishna's mid-day rest. To him have come a few devotees, Sj. Amrita of the Brahmo Samaj and also Sj. Trailokya Sannyal, the famous musician, whose sweet devotional strains have so often touched the hearts of the members of the Brahmo Samaj. It is past 2 P. M., the time when the tides of the Ganges set in. The devotees are all squatting on the floor of the Master's well-known apartment.

Rakhal is ill, and the Master is talking of it.

"Just see," he says, "Rakhal has fallen ill. Can you tell me if soda water will cure him? What am I to do now? Rakhal, eat the Prasadam of Jagannath."

But no sooner has he finished his words than a strange spiritual mood comes over him. Does he see Narayana Himself appearing before him in the form of Rakhal? He looks at him with infinite love in his eyes, and repeats the name of Govinda with accents full of love. Is it the same love that filled the bosom of mother Yashoda at the sight of her beloved child, Sri Krishna?

A rare vision indeed for human eyes to behold! Lo! a strange calm has suddenly com-

over him,—even as he recites the name of the Lord, he is plunged into Samadhi! Like a portrait drawn on canvas, he sits erect and motionless. His senses do not function. His eyes are fixed on the tip of his nose, and breathing has almost stopped. Only the mortal frame has remained in the world of men, but the bird of his soul is soaring in some blissful heaven. Who can tell where? Where indeed is he whose motherly heart was only a little while ago worrying over the ailing child? Is this sudden change called Samadhi?

An unknown Bengalee in an ochre-coloured robe enters and sits down.

The Master slowly comes down to the normal plane; but the intense spell of the superconscious experience still lingers on him.

Noticing the ochre robe—*gerua*—he says, “Why Gerua? Can one put on anything he likes? [Laughter.] Some one said, ‘I have changed the *Chandi* for the drum!’ That is he was formerly a singer of the Chandi songs now he has become a drummer! [Laughter.]

“There are three or four kinds of Vairagya.

Who may wear
the Gerua. Harrowed by the vexation and distress at home, one sometimes

puts on the Gerua garb; but such a dispassion is only temporary. Perhaps a man is out of employment; so he wears the ochre robe and goes off to Benares. Lo, after three months, a letter comes to his people,

in which he says, 'I have secured a job, and will be soon coming home; do not be anxious on my account.' But there are others who possess all the good things of the world, yet they derive no satisfaction from them, but weep for the Lord in secret. That, indeed, is real Vairagya.

"Nothing false is good. A false garb, though a holy one, is not good. If the heart does not correspond to the outer garb, the results are disastrous in the long run. By constant indulgence in lies or false deeds, one loses all sense of fear for such acts. Better far is the plain cloth than that. The mind is attached to the world and there are occasional falls,—yet garbed in Gerua!—that is dangerous.

"The good should not speak or do false things, even in a dramatic representation. I went to see the performance of 'Nava-Brindavan' at Keshab Sen's. Some one appeared on the stage with what they called a cross. Another actor sprinkled water. They said it was 'the water of peace.' Then appeared another in the role of a drunkard, staggering and reeling."

A Brahmo Devotee: It was K.....Babu.

Sri Ramakrishna: It is not good for a devotee even to play such parts.

"It is wrong to engage the mind for a long time in such things; for the mind is like a bleached cloth which can absorb any colour in which you dip it. And if you leave it long

in unreal things, it will become imbued with the hue of unreality.

"I went to Keshab Sen's on another occasion to attend the performance of 'Nimai-Sannyasa.'* But some flatterers of Keshab Sen spoilt the whole thing. One of them said to Keshab, 'You are the Chaitanya of this Kali Yuga.' Keshab laughingly looked at me and asked, 'Who are you then?' I replied, 'I am the servant of your servant, a particle of the dust of your feet.' Keshab desired fame.

"Narendra, Rakhal—all these boys are Ever-perfect. They have been devoted to the Lord in every birth! Men struggle hard to attain a little of Bhakti, but these boys love Him from their very birth. They are verily like a Siva-lingam which has burst forth from the nether world and not like one which has been installed by man.

"The Ever-perfect constitute a quite distinct class of men. Not all birds have hooked bills. They are like Prahlada, never tied down to the world.

"The ordinary man practises Sadhana and cherishes devotion towards the Lord, but he is attached to the world as well and is attracted by the lure of Kamini-Kanchana. He is like a fly, which sits indiscriminately on flower, sweetmeat and filth." *₂

Nityasiddha and
Raga-bhakti.

* 'The Sannyasa, or the Renunciation, of Sri Chaitanya.'

The devotees silently listen to the Master's solemn words. And he continues:

"But an Ever-perfect one is like a bee which sips the honey of flowers alone. He, the Nityasiddha, enjoys only the bliss of God, and never inclines to the joys of the world.

"And his Bhakti is not the result of any strenuous Sadhana. 'Recite His name so many times, meditate on Him so long, worship Him in such and such a way'—all this relates to 'Vidhivadiya' or Ritualistic Devotion.

"It is like making your way along the borders of a field full of growing corn, when you want to cross straight over to the other side; or it is like sailing along the tortuous course of a river to get to a village right in front of you.

"But all these disciplines vanish when you have achieved Raga-bhakti,—Prema-bhakti,—the Devotion of Love,—and you love God as your own. Then it is like going over to the other side of a field which has been reaped,—you do not need to take the roundabout course along the border of the field,—you simply walk across it; or it is like going to a village right in front of you, when the country is flooded deep with water,—you do not need to follow the tortuosities of the river; you have simply to ply your boat straight across.

"And indeed you cannot realise the Lord until this Raga-bhakti, this supreme attachment and love for Him, has come to you."

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Amrita: Sir, what do you experience in the state of Samadhi?

Sri Ramakrishna: Have you heard how by constantly thinking of a Bhramarakeeta*, a cockroach becomes transformed into that insect? Do you know what I experience?—it is as though a fish had been released from a pot into the Ganges.

Amrita: Does not even the slightest trace of your 'I' remain?

Sri Ramakrishna: Yes, a little of it generally remains: however hard you may rub gold dust on the grindstone, a little particle will always survive. It is like a big fire and the ego is one of its sparks. I lose my external consciousness completely; but She allows a bit of the ego to remain for the enjoyment of Divine communion. There can be no such enjoyment without 'I' and 'Thou'.

"But that slight trace of the ego She sometimes wipes out. Then it is called 'Jada Samadhi' or Nirvikalpa Samadhi.† Words cannot describe that experience. A salt doll went to measure the depth of the sea, but before it had gone far into the water, it melted away,—it became one with the saline water of the sea. Who then would come up to say how deep the Sea was?"

* A kind of insect.

† The supreme state of the Infinite and Undifferentiated Consciousness.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HOUSE OF SJ. BALARAM BASU, — APRIL, 1883.

Saturday, the 7th of April, 1883. Sri Ramakrishna is at the house of his devotee, Balaram, in Calcutta. He arrived here in the morning and took his dinner. Narendra, Rakhal, Bhavanath and a few other devotees were also invited to the dinner. For the Master often says to Balaram, "Entertain them,—it will be equal to feeding a legion of Sadhus."

It is about 1 P. M. The Master is seated in the north-eastern apartment of Balaram's parlour with Narendra, Rakhal, Bhavanath, Balaram and M.

The Master is talking about a dramatic performance, he had been to a few days before at Keshab Sen's. The play was 'Nava-Brindavan,' in which Keshab himself took the part of 'Powhari Baba'. Narendra also had joined in the performance.

Sri Ramakrishna: Keshab entered in the role of a Sadhu and, in the course of his part, sprinkled the 'water of peace'.* I did not like it. What is this,—sprinkling 'peace-water' in a dramatic performance?

"There was another who appeared on the stage as 'Sin'. But such acting is not desirable.

* Santi-jal as it is called, is similar to 'Holy-water.'

It is equally wrong either to commit sin or to feign it."

Narendra is a little out of sorts, but the Master very much wishes that he would sing. So he says, "Narendra, they would like to hear you; will you sing a little?"

Narendra takes up the Tanpura † and, fingering it, sings:

"Bird, bonny Bird, that nestles within my heart, sing!

"My Lord is the Divine Tree that grants every wish, and It bears the four-fold fruits of Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. O Bird, nestle in the Lord, and pour forth thy song in His rapturous praise, and regale thy soul with His four-fold ambrosial boons.

"Sing, 'He is the comfort of my soul!' Sing, 'He is the joy of my life!' Sing, O Bird of my life, let thy melodies never cease in praise of my Lord!

"Cry for the water of life, O cry as the 'chataka' cries in burning thirst for the water of the clouds! Sing, sweet Bird, sing let thy melodies never cease in praise of my Lord!"

And he sings:

"Brahman! Thou Joy of the Universe! O Great Light.

"Supreme Lord! Thou Lord of the worlds! O Soul of my soul!"

And again:

"O King of kings, vouchsafe me Thy vision.

"I dedicate my life at Thy feet. But that, alas, is seared by the world's furnace.

"My heart, alas, is deeply stained with sin. And bound in Delusion's heavy chain, helpless I lie. O Lord, most merciful, release me; grant me freedom by Thy gracious look!"

Narendra sings two more songs; and after he has ended, the Master tells Bhavanath to sing. And he sings:

† The Tanpura is a stringed musical instrument.

"O Lord of mercy, verily I have no greater friend than Thee! Who is there amongst men that stands by me through weal and woe, forgiving my sins and soothing my pain and ear?"

"Thou art the helmsman that steers my craft of life across the world's perilous seas. And Thy grace it is, O Lord, that allays the tumults of my raging passions.

"Thou pourest the water of peace on my burning penitent Soul. And Thine is the bosom that will shelter me, when forsaken in my dying hour."

Narendra: (smiling) Bhavanath has given up taking fish and betel.

Sri Ramakrishna: (smilingly to Bhavanath)

Why? What is the harm in fish and betel? There is nothing wrong in them. The real renunciation is the renunciation of Kamini-Kanchana.

"Where is Rakhal?"

A Devotee: He is sleeping.

Sri Ramakrishna: (smiling) A man came to see the *jatra** with a mat under his arm, but finding the Jatra yet to begin he spread the mat and lay down to sleep. When he woke up, the Jatra was over. [All laugh.] Thereupon he put the mat under his arm and went back home.

Sj. Ramdayal is lying ill in another room. The Master goes there and inquires from the door how he is.

It is 4 P. M. The Master is sitting in the parlour with Narendra, Rakhal, M., Bhavanath and other devotees. A few Brahma devotees

* Old-fashioned theatrical performances.

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have come to visit him, and he is talking with them.

A Brahmo Devotee: Sir, have you read 'Panchadasi' ? *

Sri Ramakrishna: These have to be studied in the beginning; it is in the early stages that one reasons and discusses. But afterwards, —'with utmost care, O my mind, install the Beloved Mother in the heart. May I and thou alone see Her, let none else pry into it.'

"In the course of Sadhana, one has to learn all these.† But when She has been realised, there is no lack of knowledge,—She Herself provides on unfailing supply.

"Man has to spell the words when he first learns to write, but afterwards he can write fluently.

"When gold is melted, the smith concentrates his whole energy on the process, working the bellows with one hand, fanning with the other, and blowing a pipe with his mouth, till the gold is dissolved. The moment the molten gold is poured into the cast, the goldsmith breathes a sign of relief.

"Mere study of the scriptures is of no help. If you live amidst Kamini-Kanchana, you are not able to comprehend the true significance of

* 'Panchadasi' is a standard treatise on the Advaita Vedanta by Vidyaranya Muni.

† That is to say, the Scriptures.

the scriptures. Attachment to the world takes away knowledge. "With wistful hope, I learnt many a sweet poetic thing but, alas, I fell in love with a deaf man, and all was marred."*

Sri Ramakrishna then talks of Keshab Sen to the Brahma devotees and says,

"Keshab's is both 'Yoga' and 'Bhoga'—spirituality and worldly enjoyment. He lives in the world, yet he keeps his mind in God."

A devotee refers to the recently concluded Convocation of the Calcutta University, saying, "I found, it was a regular forest of human beings."

Sri Ramakrishna: The sight of a great concourse of people inspires one with the thought of God. Had I seen it, I would have gone into Samadhi.

* This is a quotation from a well-known Bengali poem.

CHAPTER X.

THE DAKSHINESWAR TEMPLE—APRIL, 1883

Come, friend, let us once more go to visit Sri Ramakrishna in the Temple of Dakshineswar. There we shall see his joyous play with the devotees and his continuous spiritual transports. We shall see how he sometimes plunges into Samadhi, and sometimes loses himself in the intoxicating bliss of singing the praise of the Lord, and, at other times, how he converses with the devotees like an ordinary man. His blessed lips utter naught but the words of God; and his mind ever soars in the highest regions of the Divine, and each breath that he breathes is consecrated by the holy name of the Mother. His are verily the winsome ways of a little child. Like a little child's, his mind also is free from even the slightest trace of egoism, completely unattached as he is to the world, blissful, simple and generous. His one theme is that God alone is real and all else is evanescent,—mere two days' existence. Come, friend, let us go on a pilgrimage to that love-intoxicated child and great Yogi, who roams alone on the shores of the infinite ocean of spirituality, which has revealed the secrets of its inmost depths to his blessed vision and sent him mad with love.

It is the morning of Sunday, the 8th of April, 1883, the first day of the bright half of

the month of Chaitra. Look ! there he is sitting like a child in his room, with Rakhal, a boy disciple, close by him.

M. prostrates himself before the Master. Ramlal is present in the room. In a short while, Kishori and a few other devotees arrive, and next comes Manilal, an old Brahmo, and makes his obeisance. He is a merchant and has recently been to Benares, where he owns a firm.

Sri Ramakrishna asks him, "You went to Benares; did you visit any Sadhus there?"

Manilal: Yes, sir, I visited Trailanga Swami and Bhaskarananda.

Sri Ramakrishna: How did you find them? Tell me.

Manilal: Yes, sir, Trailanga Swami is still living in the same house, that temple by the Benimadhav on the Manikarnika Ghaut. They say, his spiritual condition was more exalted before. Then he could perform many miracles, but he has come down a good deal.

Sri Ramakrishna: These are only the slanders of the worldly.

Manilal: Bhaskarananda mixes with every one. He is not like Trailanga Swami, always silent.

Sri Ramakrishna: Did you have any talk with Bhaskarananda?

Manilal: Yes, sir, a long one. One of our topics was 'virtue and vice'. He said, 'Do not walk in the path of sin; give up evil

thoughts: God wants all this of man. And always perform such works as can bring you merit.'

Sri Ramakrishna: Yes, these are all right for those who aim at worldly prosperity. But those who are 'awake,' who have come to know that God alone is real and all else is transient, have quite different ways. They know that God alone is the 'doer,' none else.

"They who have regained their spiritual awareness never fall into error.

Self-surrender
to God — the
higher path.

They have not to take pains to shun evil; for they are so full of the love of God that whatever actions they do are right and proper. They know that it is not they who perform those actions, but that it is God, and they are His servants. They are the machine, He is the driver of the machine; they do as He makes them do, they speak as He makes them speak and they live as He makes them live!

"Those who are awake have gone beyond both good and evil. They see that God is doing everything. There was in a certain place a monastery, the inmates of which used to go out daily to beg alms. One day a monk went out to beg his daily food and came upon a zemindar beating a man very severely. The Sadhu was very tender-hearted, so he intervened and asked the landlord to desist. But the zemindar was so enraged by that

time that he poured forth all his wrath on the Sadhu and beat him until he fell down prostrate and senseless. Word was brought to the monastery that one of the brothers had been severely beaten by a landlord; so the monks ran to where he was still lying unconscious, and carried him to the Math and laid him down on a bed. And they sat round his unconscious body with sad hearts and began to fan him. Then one of them suggested that milk should be poured into his mouth little by little. After some time, these doses of milk revived him and he opened his eyes and looked about him. At that, some one, to make sure that his senses were properly restored and he recognised his brothers, shouted in his ear, 'Brother, who is he that is pouring milk into your mouth?' The monk faintly replied, 'Brother, He that beat me, even He is now pouring milk into my mouth.'

"Until one has realised God, one cannot reach that state."

Manilal: That is a very exalted state of which you speak. I talked on such topics with Bhaskarananda.

Sri Ramakrishna: Does he live in any house?

Manilal: Yes, with certain people.

Sri Ramakrishna: How old is he?

Manilal: About fifty-five years.

Sri Ramakrishna: What else did you ask him?

Manilal: I asked him about the means of attaining Bhakti. He said, 'Take His name. Repeat the name of Rama.

Sri Ramakrishna: That is very nice!

II.

Worship in the Kali temple, the Vishnu temple and the twelve Siva temples is over, and in a little while, the bell rings for the *Bhogarati*. It is the month of Chaitra, and now, at noon, the sun has become very hot. A breeze is blowing from the south. The tide has set in, and the waters of the Ganges are flowing back northward. After his dinner, the Master is enjoying a little rest.

Rakhal comes from the neighbourhood of Basirhat, where people suffer severely from drought during the summer.

Sri Ramakrishna says to Manilal, "Rakhal told me that in his district people suffer very much for want of water. Why not dig a tank there? It will prove a great benefit to many. (Smilingly) You have a mint of money—what will you do with so much? But I am told the oil-man caste is extremely parsimonious."

At this, the Master and the devotees burst out laughing.

And Manilal is indeed parsimonious.* He has a garden house at Baranagore, where he often passes some days in solitude, and it is

* In later years, he made a generous gift of Rs. 25,000 for the maintenance of poor students.

during that time that he pays his visits to Sri Ramakrishna. But although he is not lacking in money, he never hires an entire carriage to go over to Baranagore. He reaches Sovabazar in a tram-car; there he engages one seat in a carriage to go to Baranagore; in this way he arrives at his garden house. He lives at Sinduriapatti in Calcutta, and it is in his house that the local Brahmo Samaj have their prayers. On the occasion of its annual festival, he invites a large number of devotees and also Sri Ramakrishna.

Manilal does not make any immediate reply to this reference to his racial characteristic. But in course of conversation, he remarks casually, "Sir, you spoke of a certain tank. You might simply have expressed your wish. Why allude to 'oilman' and all that?"

Some of the devotees have been laughing in their sleeves. On hearing Manilal, the Master also laughs out.

III.

After some time, a few Brahmo devotees arrive from Calcutta. The room is already crowded. The Master is sitting on his small cot, facing to the north, child-like, with a smile on his face. He now cheerfully engages in a conversation with the Brahmo devotees.

Sri Ramakrishna: You talk glibly of love. But is it such a trifle? Chaitanyadev indeed realised love. Love has two signs. First, you

will forget the world, its very memory will be wiped off your mind.

“So intense is your love for Him that you become dead to all consciousness of the outside world. Chaitanyadev ‘sees Brindavan in forests and the Jamuna in the sea!’ Secondly, you will lose all affection for your body which you once so fondly loved. This identification of self with the body will go, once for all.

“You cannot have love till you have seen God.

“There are signs by which you can know if a man has realised God. God-vision is not far from him in whom love has manifested its glories.

“And what are these glories? Discrimination, dispassion, kindness, service of holy men and love of their company, chanting the name and praise of God, truthfulness and such other virtues.

“When these signs of love become manifest in a man, you can truly say that presently he will see the Lord. The condition of a servant’s household clearly indicates whether his master has really condescended to visit it. The grounds are first cleared of weeds, the house is tidied up and the floor is swept. And presently the master himself sends carpets, cushions, pipes and smoking bowls and other costly furniture. And when the neighbours

see those articles arriving, they are convinced that the master himself will shortly follow."

A Devotee: Sir, should I first practise discrimination to attain self-control?

Sri Ramakrishna: Yes, there is such a path, the path of discrimination. But through the path of devotion, the subtle senses come readily and naturally under control, and easily too. Carnal pleasures become more and more insipid as love divine grows in your heart. Can the pleasures of the body attract husband and wife on the day that their child has died?

Devotee: But I have not learnt to love Him!

Sri Ramakrishna: Take His name constantly. This will cleanse away all sin; and lust, anger, and all desire for the pleasures of the body will vanish.

Devotee: But I do not find delight in His name!

Sri Ramakrishna: Then pray to Him with a yearning heart that He may teach you to relish His name. Undoubtedly He will grant your prayer.

With this the Master bursts into a song with his celestial voice, sending out the agonised prayers of his loving heart to the Mother, invoking Her grace for the suffering humanity:

"O Mother, I blame none. It is I who dug for the water which now threatens to drown me.

"I sank ~~the~~ in the holy land with the spade of my passions and the dark waters of death came forth and filled the well.

"I tremble at my impending fate, for I myself have proved my own enemy. I see no way to check the rising waters and I am in despair.

"The waters of death are rising; lo, they have reached my chest. I know not how to escape this watery grave. O Mother, Thou art my only hope, O save me by Thy gracious look!"

And then another song describing man as suffering from a delirious fever and showing how delight in Her name is the only remedy for that fever.

Sri Ramakrishna: 'I find no delight in

Thy name!' If a delirious patient loses all taste for food, despair of his life. But if he relishes

food even slightly, you may hope for him. So I say, find joy in His name. Take His name: Durga, Krishna, Siva—any name will do. And if you daily feel a greater attraction and a greater joy, for taking His name you need fear no more; the delirium must get cured and His grace will surely descend on you!

"As is your purpose and inclination, so is your gain. One day two friends were going along a street when they found in a certain place an assembly of men listening to a discourse on the Bhagavatam. One of them said, 'Come, friend, let us hear the discourse.' But the other peeped in for a minute, and went away and entered a house of ill-fame.

His name,—
the cure for life's
fitful fever.

Sincerity,—the
measure of
spiritual gain.

But when he had stayed there for some time, he felt a great disgust and said to himself, 'Fie on me! My friend is listening to the holy words of God, and here am I in this disgusting place!' The other friend, who was hearing the Bhagavatam, had begun to regret his presence there thinking, 'What a fool I am to have been listening to the gibberish of this fellow, while my friend has been passing all this time in joy and merriment!' So when they died, he who attended the discourse on the Bhagavatam was taken to hell by the messengers of 'Yama' and he who had been to the house of the harlot was taken to heaven by the messengers of Vishnu.

"Verily the Lord sees the heart of man, not what he does or where he lives! 'Janardana' * looks into man's motives."

"When the 'Kartabhajas'† initiate their disciples into the *mantra*, they say, 'Now *mantor* ;‡ that is to say, Now it all depends on thy mind.' They say, 'He who has the right mind finds the right path and also achieves the right goal.'"

"Hanuman leaped over the sea simply through the strength of his mind. He had the strong faith that 'I am the servant of

* One of the names of Vishnu

† The Kartabhajas are a minor sect of Hinduism

‡ It is a pun on the word *mantra*, which is pronounced in colloquial Bengali as *mantor* and means 'a sacred formula' and 'thy mind.'

Rama ; I have uttered His name ; what can I not do ?'

"As long as there is ego, there is ignorance. There cannot be any Liberation for you as long as your egoism remains.

"The cow cries '*hamma*,' '*hamma*,' and the goat cries '*ma*,' '*ma*,' therefore they have no end of suffering.

The barrier of egoism. Butchers kill them ; shoes and tom-toms are made of their skin, but that is not the last of their misery. In Hindustani, '*hum*' and '*ma*' both mean 'I,' and it is because the cow and the goat cry 'I,' 'I,' that they suffer so terribly. Next, the cotton-carder makes bow-strings of their intestines ; and then only, in the hands of the cotton-carder, do they learn to say '*tuhu*,' '*tuhu*,' ~~thou~~ 'thou,' 'thou,' and they are saved and their suffering ends.

" 'O God, Thou art the doer, not I,'—this is Knowledge.

"Be lowly and humble, only thus can you rise. The lark builds its nest on the ground, but it soars high up in the sky. You cannot grow corn on the high land. The land must be low in order that water may accumulate, and then only can you grow your corn.

"You must take a little pains to keep the company of the good.—Worldly concerns always abide at home, and the disease is perpetual. The bird utters 'Rama,' 'Rama,' only when it is chained to its perch ; but when it flies off to the forest, it screams and screeches again.

“Money alone cannot make a nobleman.
 One of the signs of a nobleman’s
 ‘Light thy lamp!’ home is that all the rooms are
 illumined. The poor cannot afford
 to buy oil for so many lights. Likewise this
 temple of the body must not be left un-
 illumined,—the lamp of Knowledge should be
 lighted therein. ‘Light the lamp of Knowledge
 in thy chamber and behold the Face of
 Brahmamayee!’

“Every one can attain Knowledge, for
 every individual soul is connected with the
 Universal Soul. The gas pipe is laid in every
 house, through which comes the supply of
 gas from the Gas Company. Apply to the
 authorities, and they will make every arrange-
 ment for supplying gas to you, and your
 house will be lighted. They have their office
 at Sealdah. [All laugh.]

“The man who has attained spiritual
 consciousness is known by certain marks and
 symptoms. He never loves to hear or speak
 anything but the words of God, even as the
 lark cries for the water of the clouds, although
 the seven seas, the Ganges, the Jumna and
 other rivers are all full of water;—it will never
 drink any other water even if the agony of
 thirst pierces its heart!”

IV.

Requested by the Master, Ramlal and a
 Brahmin officer of the temple are singing:

"Abide, O Lord, O Lover of Devotion, in the Brindavan of my Heart and my Devotion shall be Thy beloved Radha. My Body shall be the Home of Nanda, where Thou shalt find in my Affection Thy mother Yashomati, and in my Desire for Salvation, Thy Shepherdess.

"Lift up, O Lord, the Mount Govardhana of my Sin and destroy Kamsa's Demons,—my six Passions. And play Thy Flute of Grace, charming the Cow of my Mind, and ever flourish in the Pasture-land of my Life!

"My Love shall flow as Jamuna's Stream, beside which my Hope shall grow as the Peepul tree. Do Thou ever dwell under it in Thy infinite mercy to Thy servant! And if naught but the Cowherd's love can hold Thee in Braja, then Dasharathi shall be Thy Cowherd; O Lord, let him be Thy servant!"

Again:

"Have you seen the Dark One, with flute in hand and a charming smile lighting his lips, illumining the worlds with the lustre of his beauty? I have seen him, and now the dark hue of the summer cloud has lost its charms for me.

"The yellow garment that clings round his comely limbs far outshines the lightning in its dazzling splendour. And a wreath of wild flowers adorns his lotus-bosom and swings gently, kissing his blessed feet.

'Lo, there he stands, the moon of Nanda's race, shining like myriad moons and flooding Jamuna's bank with his light divine, to steal the maidens' hearts and lure them from their hearth and home!"

They sing again:

"My mind was hovering like a kite in the firmament of the Mother's hallowed feet, when came a gust of sin's foul wind and struck it down to earth.

"Maya disturbed its even balance by weighing down on one side and I could fly the kite no more. It became entangled in the string of love for wife and children and was rent in twain.

"It lost its crest of knowledge and fell down when I flew it up. How could it fly indeed, deprived of its head? Its six companions* therefore won the race

"I wore the ties of love of its free will; but when the play began it lost its head. Nareshchandra rues this game of smiles and tears; it were better, he thinks, had he not come at all!"

* See footnote p. 116.

And then follows another song which says that 'love is a tiger.'

Sri Ramakrishna: Verily as the tiger devours animals, so does 'the tiger of love' eat up lust, anger and other passions. If once you learn to love God, your passions naturally vanish. And this state the Gopis attained through their love of Krishna!

"Love can also be likened to collyrium. Said Srimati, 'Dear friends, everywhere I see Krishna!' The friends replied, 'You have applied the collyrium of love to your eyes, therefore you see him everywhere.' They say that if you prepare collyrium by burning the brains of a frog and paint your eyes with it, you will see snakes all around.

"Those who are forever engrossed in Kamini-Kanchana and do not think of God for a moment are the 'bound ones.' What great deed can you expect of them? They are like a crow-pecked mango which you can neither offer to the Deity, nor, eat yourself without hesitation.

"These bound ones,—the worldly people,—are like unto the caterpillars shut up within their cocoons. The caterpillars can, if they like, pierce a hole through and come out. But they have not the heart to forsake a house which they have built themselves. And the end is death.

The plight of
the bound ones.

“ But ‘ the liberated ones ’ are never swayed by Kamini-Kanchana. * There are some caterpillars that bore their way out of their cocoons. But they are very rare indeed !

“ There are ‘ Sadhana-siddhas ’ and ‘ Kripa-siddhas ; ’ that is to say, those that attain perfection through endeavour and practice and those that attain it through the grace of the Lord. Some have to raise their crops by means of laborious irrigation, while others have their fields inundated by the rains and are saved from all the troubles of irrigation.

“ The Kripa-siddhas are exempted from all the labour and troubles of Sadhana, though they are very few indeed. So also the Nitya-siddhas, the ever-perfect ones, are exempt,—they are born in every life with an innate knowledge of the Self, even as a spring obstructed by the merest accident gushes forth the moment a workman happens to clear its outlet. When men see the first manifestation of their love and devotion, they are filled with a great amazement, and they exclaim, ‘ Oh ! where was all this devotion, dispassion and love concealed ? ’ ”

The Master’s talk turns on love,—the love of the Gopis. Ramlal sings :

“ Thou art my all in all, O Lord ! In Thee I live and have my being, and I have none but Thee to call my own.

“ Thou art my joy and peace, my hope and help. Thou art my wealth and strength and my knowledge and wisdom. Thou art my home and my comfort, my kindred and my friend

"Thou art my present and my future; Thou art my heaven and my salvation. Thou art my Scriptures and Commandments, my guide and my *Kalpataru*; and Thou art my infinite happiness.

"Thou art the way and Thou art the end. Thou art my creator, my protector and my God. Thou art the chastising father, the loving mother, O Lord, Thou art my helmsman in the sea of the world!"

Sri Ramakrishna: Ah, how beautiful! 'Thou art my all in all!' When Akrura came to take away Sri Krishna, the Gopis said to Srimati, 'Radha, he has come to rob thee of thy all in all.' Such love! Such yearning for God!

And Ramlal sings again:

"Hold not, hold not the chariot wheel,—does the wheel drive the car? Lo, the Lord who has contrived the world has contrived this plot!"

Hearing the song, the Master loses himself in deep Samadhi. He is sitting in the same posture with folded hands as we see him in the picture, calm and still, only tears of joy are trickling down from the outer corners of his eyes.

After a long time, the Master partly regains his normal mood. But he is talking with Him whom he sees in the depths of Samadhi. A few words reach the ears of the devotees.

The Master says: "Thou art I and I am Thou! Thou eatest, Thou—I—eatest! . . . Nicely indeed Thou art acting!

"What is this confusion? I see Thee on all sides.

“O Krishna, friend of the lowly! O Lord of my soul! O Govinda!”

These last ejaculations are scarcely out of his lips when he merges again into Samadhi. An intense silence prevails in the room, and the devotees gaze on, unsatiated, at this God-man of infinite divine moods.

V.

Lost in Samadhi, Sri Ramakrishna is sitting on the small cot. The devotees are sitting around him. S. J. Adhar Sen and a few of his friends have come to see the Master. Adhar is a Deputy Magistrate, about thirty years old, and this is his first visit to the Master. His friend, Saradacharan, a pensioned officer of the Government and lately a Deputy Inspector of Schools, is disconsolate owing to the passing away of his eldest son. So Adhar, who has himself long cherished the desire of seeing Sri Ramakrishna has brought the bereaved father to Dakshineswar. Saradacharan has been practising Sadhana for a long time.

Samadhi has broken. Sri Ramakrishna finds that the whole assembly is intently looking at him. He says: “The spiritual awareness of the worldly shines out on very rare occasions, like the flame of a lamp, nay, a ray of the sun, passing through a chink in the wall. They take the name of the Lord, but their heart is not in it, just as children utter God’s

name in oaths which they have learnt from the quarrels of their aunts.

"They have no determination; they do not care whether they fail or succeed. Suppose they are sinking a well for water: the moment they come upon a layer of stone, they lose heart; or perhaps they find a thick stratum of sand,—there they stop. But must they not dig on where they have begun? Only then can they hope to get water!

"As a man sows, so he reaps. On this there is this song:

"O Mother, I blame none. It is I who dug for the water which now threatens to drown me.

"I sank the well in holy land with the spade of my passions and the dark waters of death came forth and filled the well.

"I tremble at my impending fate, for I myself have proved to be my own enemy. I see no way to check the rising waters, and I am in despair.

"The waters of death are rising, lo, they have reached my chest: I know not how to escape this watery grave. O Mother, Thou art my only hope; O save me by Thy gracious look!"

"I' and 'mine'—this is ignorance. If you reason, you will find that what you call 'I' is nothing else than the Atman. Think whether you are body, bone or flesh, or any other thing. You will see that you are none of them,—you have no determining attributes.

"This is gold,' 'that is brass'—this discrimination is ignorance. But Knowledge is sameness, 'all is gold,'—this is Knowledge.

"When one realises God, he ceases to discriminate. But there are some who have

seen the Lord and still continue to discriminate; and there are others who, after realising Him, live as His Bhakta, taking His name and singing His praise.

"How long does the baby cry? So long as it is not given a suck at the mother's breast. When nursed it instantly ceases to cry, and in great joy drinks its mother's milk. But it is true that sometimes in course of drinking it sports and smiles.

"It is He Who has become all this. But in man He manifests Himself the most. And whoever possesses the pure nature of the child, and laughs and cries, and dances and sings, in him the Lord Himself is present."

The Master forms the acquaintance of Adhar, who speaks to him of his friend's bereavement. The Master sings:

"To arms! To arms! O man,—Death invades thy home in battle-array!

"O mount thy Devotion's car, with Wisdom's quiver strapped; and stringing thy tongue with Love's mighty string, aim, O aim the shaft divine of Mother's Holy Name!"

"Away with cars and fighters! I'll tell thee the unfailing fatal skill,—O make thy battle-field on Ganga's holy bank!"

And then he says: "What can you do?

Prepare for this Death. It has penetrated into your household; 'Fight Death!' you will have to fight it with the weapon of His holy name. He alone is the doer. I say: 'Mother, I do as thou makest me do; I say as thou makest me say; I am the machine, thou art the driver; I am

the house, thou art the mistress; I am the engine, thou art the engineer.'

"Give Her the power of attorney. You need not fear any mishap if you rely on a good man. Let Her will be done!

"And there always will be grief.—It is like a son,—born of one's own self. When Ravana fell in battle, Lakshmana ran to him and found that every bone in his body was pierced through and through. And he exclaimed to his brother, 'O Rama, how deadly are your arrows! There is no part of his body which has not been pierced by them.' Rama replied, 'Brother, these holes which you find in his bones are not made by my arrows. Grief has pierced them; these holes testify to his heavy afflictions.'

"But all these worldly affairs are transient. Home and wife and children,—they last only for a day. The palm-tree alone is true,—why lament if one or two fruits drop down?

"These are the things which God is doing: He creates, He preserves, and He destroys. Death there is; and in the hour of Dissolution all will be destroyed,—nothing will survive. Only the seeds thereof will the Mother gather up to be again sown when the time comes for a new creation, even as the housewife has her pot of miscellanies, where she stores various grain-seeds in bags."

VI.

Sri Ramakrishna is standing in the north-eastern veranda, talking to Adhar. He says : "You are a Duputy Magistrate. But this position also is due to the grace of God. Do not forget Him.

"And know, too, that all will walk down the same path one day. * It is only a 'two days' stay in this world. The world is the place of action, where you have been brought to work, even as a man comes on business from his country home to Calcutta.

"You must take some pains by way of Sadhana ; the *Karmas* must be speedily worked out. When the smiths melt gold, they blow with bellows, fan and pipe all together to make the fire blaze high ; and only when the gold has been dissolved do they ask for a smoke. All this time they have been sweating on the brow, but they can get a chance to smoke only after they have done.

"You must be very firm in your determination if you want to practise Sadhana,—you must make a strong resolve !

"The seed of His holy name is very powerful. It destroys ignorance. The seed is so soft

* Adhar Sen died eighteen months after this conversation. When Sri Ramakrishna received this sad news, he wept bitterly and long to the Mother. Adhar was extremely devoted to the Master, and the Master also looked upon him as his own.

and its sprout is so tender, yet it shoots up through the hard earth!

“The mind becomes completely distracted if you live long among Kamini-Kanchana. You must be very careful. Those who have renounced the world have not much to fear. Those who have sincerely renounced always keep themselves aloof from Kamini-Kanchana, and therefore, if they practise Sadhana, can fix their mind continually in the Lord. They are like unto the bee that sits only on flowers and drinks honey only. But the man of the world, living among Kamini-Kanchana, may set his mind on the Lord sometimes, but it is also attracted by Kamini-Kanchana, just as a fly that sits on sweetmeats, turns again to sores and filth.

“Keep your mind ever fixed on the Lord. In the beginning you must struggle a little, after-wards you will enjoy your pension!”

CHAPTER XI,

THE NANDANBAGAN BRAHMO SAMAJ, — MAY, 1883

It is 5 P. M. on, Wednesday, the 2nd of May 1883.

The late Babu Kashiswar Mitra of Nandan Bagan was a Sub-Judge and a member of the Adi Brahmo Samaj. In a spacious hall on the first floor of his house, he used to hold his prayers and would occasionally invite other devotees to celebrate festivals. Since his decease, Srinath, Yajnanath and his other sons have been following the custom of their father, and on the present occasion, they have respectfully invited the Master to their house.

When the Master arrives with Rakhal and M. and a few other devotees, he is taken to a drawing room on the ground floor, where many Brahmo devotees have assembled. Sj. Rabindranath Tagore and other members of the Tagore family are also present there.

He is then taken to the prayer-hall upstairs. An altar has been improved at the eastern side of the hall, a piano occupies the south-western corner, and some chairs are arranged at the northern side . . . The service will begin in the evening, when Sj. Bhairab Bandyopadhyay and a few other Brahmos will deliver sermons from the altar. Most of the Brahmo devotees are pacing in the

down-stairs veranda and extensive courtyard, it being the summer season. But Sj. Janaki Ghosal and a few others have come to listen to the holy words of God from the blessed lips of the Master.

On entering the hall, the Master bows before the altar, and having taken his seat, says to Rakhal, M. and the other devotees:

"Narendra asked me, 'What is the virtue of bowing before the Brahmo Samaj Temple?'

"The Temple indeed reminds me of the Lord,—the thought of Him flashes into my mind. Wherever men speak of Him, there God appears, and all the holy places as it were congregate there. And verily the sight of such places invokes the recollection of God Himself!

"A Bhakta went into ecstasy at the sight of a *Babla* tree, for he remembered that the handle of the axe that was used in the garden of the god Radhakanta was made of this wood.

"So deep was the devotion of a disciple to his Guru that, on seeing one of the Guru's neighbours, he fell into a trance!

"A cloud, a blue cloth, or a likeness of Sri Krishna would fill Srimati's mind with an intense consciousness of Sri Krishna and madden her with an anguished longing for Him."

The ways of the
Bhakta.

Ghosal: But madness is not desirable.

Sri Ramakrishna: What do you say! Is this madness caused by the thought of sense-objects that it will delude?—It is effected by an intense thought of God. Are you not aware of Love-madness and Wisdom-madness?

A Brahmo Devotee: How is God to be attained?

Sri Ramakrishna: By loving Him, and by ever discriminating that God alone is real and that this world is ephemeral. The peepul tree alone lives on, its fruits last but a few days.

Devotee: What are we to do with lust, anger and our other passions?

Sri Ramakrishna: Turn the course of the six passions towards God in the following ways: To have *inter-course* with the Self; let this be your desire. Be *angry* with those who are your obstacles in the God-ward path; *cov*et Him. When you *indulge in egoistic feelings*, do it in relation to Him: say, 'My Krishna' or 'My Rama'! If you must assert your *pride*, be like Bibhishana,—'I have bowed before Rama; this head will not bow before anybody else.'

★ *Devotee*: If it is He who is driving me to all actions, then how can I be responsible for my sins?

Sri Ramakrishna: (Smiling) Duryodhana also said something like that: Divine Will and man's responsibility. 'Thou, O Lord, abidest in my heart, and I do as Thou makest me do.' He who really believes that 'God alone is the doer, and I am but an instrument' cannot commit any sin. A perfect dancer never makes a wrong step.

"Indeed, till the heart becomes pure, one cannot even believe in the existence of God."

The Master looks at the congregation and remarks, "It is very beneficial to assemble now and then like this and sing His name and praise. But the God-devotion of the worldly people is very transitory, even-like a drop of water sprinkled on heated iron."

The hour of the evening service has come. The large hall is filled with the Brahmo devotees, and a few Brahmo ladies occupy the chairs with hymn-books in their hands. Singing to the accompaniment of harmonium and piano now begins; and the Master's delight knows no bounds. Then follow *Udbodhana**, prayer and worship, and the preachers at the altar recite the Vedic Mantrams:

"Om! Thou art our Father. Grant us Knowledge. Do not destroy us!"

And the congregation recites with the preachers:

* Preliminary service.

"Om! Brahman, the Truth, the Knowledge, the Infinite. He is Bliss and Immortality. He shines. He is Peace. He is Good. He is One."

The preachers then recite the invocation:

"We bow unto Thee, Thou Supreme Being, and the Great First Cause. We bow unto Thee, O Light of Knowledge and the Support of all the Worlds."

And then they pray:

"From the unreal lead us to the Real. From darkness lead us unto light. From death lead us to immortality. Reach us through and through our self. And—Oh Thou Terrible!—evermore protect us from ignorance, by Thy sweet compassionate Face."

Listening to the recitations and prayers, the Master is filled with rapture. And a preacher reads the sermon, ending the service.

Most of the Brahmo devotees go to the courtyard and veranda down-stairs to enjoy the cool breeze. Preparations are going on for the entertainment of the devotees with *luchi* and *mishtanna*.

* It is nine o'clock at night, and the Master ~~has~~ to go back to Dakshineswar. But the hosts are too engrossed with their householder guests to render any hospitality to the Master. Says Sri Ramakrishna to Rakhal and others, "Halloo! nobody calls us." Rakhal replies angrily, "Come, sir, let us go back to Dakshi-

neswar." "Stop, I say!" the Master replies laughingly. "Who will pay three rupees and two annas for carriage hire? Mere obstinacy won't do! Without a penny, yet making empty threats! Besides, where can we eat at this late hour?"

After a long time the dinner is announced. All the devotees are called together to sit down. The Master, Rakhal and others make their way upstairs through the crush, but the place is too crowded, and a seat for the Master is procured with the greatest difficulty in an unclean corner. A Brahmin woman serves him some curry, but he has not the heart to take it; he seasons the *luchi* with salt and eats it, and also a little *mishtanna*.

Infinite is the mercy of our Master! If the hosts in their inexperience have failed to honour him duly, how can he resent it? For if he departs without receiving hospitality, great harm will come to them; besides, have they not made the celebration in the name of God?

The Master has got into the carriage,—but who will pay the hire? The hosts are nowhere to be found!*

* The Master afterwards referred to this incident, saying; "They went to them for the carriage hire, but were at first driven off. At last, after a hard struggle, three rupees were realised; but they refused to pay the remaining two annas; they said that was enough."

CHAPTER XII.

THE HOUSE OF RAMCHANDRA DATTA,—JUNE, 1883

It is Saturday, the 2nd of June, 1883, corresponding to the twelfth day of the dark half of *Vaishakha*. To-day Sri Ramakrishna will visit the house of S^j. Ramchandra Datta. This house, situated in Madhu Roy's Lane, at Simla, Calcutta, was built with Ram's own earnings. After finishing his studies in medicine, he secured an appointment in the Calcutta Medical College, and is at present an assistant chemical examiner and a lecturer on chemistry in the Indian Science Association. Though a householder, Ram lives unattached to the world, doing his household duties as service of the Lord. The Master is full of praise for his untiring service of the devotees, who always find the loving care and the comforts of home under his hospitable roof.

To-day Ram is holding a festival in his house to celebrate the visit of the Master. The small courtyard has been tastefully decorated. Arrangements have been made for a recital of the Bhagavatam. The Kathaka* is sitting on a small platform, reciting the story of King Harischandra's life. . . .

Here comes the Master! Ram goes forward to welcome him. He takes the dust of his sacred feet and escorts him to a seat in the courtyard, which has been set apart in a

* A professional reciter of the Scriptures stories.

conspicuous place before the reciter's platform. The devotees sit surrounding him and M. is seated close by.

The recital continues: "Said Biswamitra †, 'O great king, having made me a gift of the sea-girt earth, you have no claim for any place in it. You may go to Kashi, which is the place of Siva, the Great God. Come then, I shall guide you there with your wife and child, and there you will find me my sacrificial fee.' So Bhagavan Biswamitra went to Benares, with the king and they all visited the temple of Bisweswara."

At the very mention of the visit to Bisweswara, Sri Ramakrishna is filled with ecstasy and faintly utters, "Siva! Siva!"

And the narrative goes on, telling how the king, unable to pay the fee, sells his wife Shaivya and his son Rohitaswa to a Brahmin, and how while living in his house the child, while gathering flowers one day, is bitten by a snake. "It is a dark and fearful night on which the child dies. The old Brahmin would not come out of his bed and there is none to help cremating the body. So Shaivya herself is carrying the child, wending her lonely way to the cremation ground in the rain, while thunder and lightning flashes rend the night of gloom. In fright and grief she comes, crying bitter tears!

† King Harischandra had made a gift of his whole kingdom to the sage Biswamitra in fulfilment of a promise.

"Now the king, to make up the remaining portion of the fee, had sold himself to a Chandala, and in the garb of a Chandala is now living in the cremation ground, receiving the cremation fees and burning the dead. Many a one is laid on the funeral pyre and many a one has been burnt to ashes. The dark night has spread a nameless horror over the place, and lo, here comes Shaivya, uttering bitter laments!"

And who in the audience there is not pierced to the heart at this doleful narration and does not feel his heart melt within him?—A mournful murmur passes through the assembly.

But what about the Master?—Absolutely unmoved, he is listening to the story; only a tear drop appears in the corner of his eye, but that he wipes off with his hand.

Then comes the end of the story: "At last Biswamitra came, recalled the child to life, and they all visited Bisweswara; and Harischandra was reinstated in his kingdom."

After the recital is over, Sri Ramakrishna comes to the outer apartment, and sits there surrounded by the devotees. He requests the Kathaka to tell something about Uddhava.

The Kathaka begins: "When Uddhava came to Brindavan, the Gopas and Gopis of Braja ran out eagerly to meet him and hurriedly asked, 'How does Sri Krishna do?'

Does he ever speak of us, or has he forgotten us?' Some of them burst into tears. Others showed him all over Brindavan, saying, 'Here it is where he lifted the Mount Govardhan'; 'Here he slayed the demons Dhenuka and Shakata'; 'In this pasture he grazed his cows'; 'Here are the Jamuna's sands where he passed many a delightful hour'; 'Here he played with the shepherd boys'; 'In these harbours he kept his tryst with the shepherdesses.' Uddhava said, 'Why are you so much distressed by his absence? He is omnipresent, he is God Himself, and nothing exists without him!' But they replied, 'We do not understand you, we are illiterate. We know only him, the Krishna of our Brindavan, who played his various plays here.' 'But he is God Himself,' rejoined Uddhava, 'and by thinking of him, men get salvation and are freed from any further re-incarnation in the world.' But the Gopis said, 'Oh, we do not understand all this talk about salvation; we want to see the Krishna of our heart!'

Listening to the recital, Sri Ramakrishna is filled with ecstasy. "The Gopis are quite right!" he says, and bursts into song in his sweetly melodious voice:

"I mind not, oh mind not to give thee Salvation. But Love — it is hard to give. Whoever gets it, excels all and claims triumphantly the homage of the worlds!

"I'll tell thee the secret of love, O Chandravali: it is *er* than Salvation! And forever it binds me at Bali's door, down in the nether world!

"In Brindavan alone it is found, and none knows it but the Gopas and Gopis. Verily for this Love, I carry the loads of Nanda as his obedient son!"

Sri Ramakrishna: The devotion of the Gopis is the devotion of love, constant and unmixed and unflinching. Do you know what is constant and unmixed devotion? There is a kind of devotion which is mixed with knowledge. As for example: 'Sri Krishna has become all this. He is the Supreme God. He is Rama, Siva and Shakti.' But this element, of knowledge is absent from the devotion of love. When Hanuman came to Dwaraka, he wanted to see Sita-Rama. The Lord said to

Rukmini, 'Assume at once the form of Sita, or there is no escape from his hands!' When the

The Love of
the Gopis.

Pandavas celebrated the Rajasuya sacrifice, all the kings placed Yudhisthira on the throne and saluted him. But Bibhishana said. 'I bow to Narayana alone, to none else!' At that the Lord himself made a deep obeisance to Yudhisthira, and only then did Bibhishana prostrate himself, crown and all, before the king.

"Do you know what this devotion of love is like? It is like that of the daughter-in-law. She serves her brother-in-law, father-in-law, husband and other relations by bringing them water to wash their feet, handing over the towel and spreading seats for them; but she maintains quite a different relation with her husband.

"There are two things in the devotion of love,—'I'-ness and 'my'-ness. Yashoda thought that none would look after 'her Gopala and unless she herself did it, he would fall ill. She never looked upon Sri Krishna as God. And what is 'my'-ness? It is looking upon Him as one's own,—'*my* Gopala!' When Uddhava said, 'Mother, your Krishna is the absolute Master of the world, he is God Himself, he is not human,' Yashoda replied, 'Oh, I don't ask about your Master of the world; I want to know how my Gopala is doing! I do not know your Lord of the universe; I want to know about my Gopala!'

"How unflinching was the faith of the Gopis! After many entreaties at the palace-gate at Mathura*, the Gopis secured entrance to the assembly hall and were taken by the gateman to Sri Krishna. But when they found him wearing a turban, they bent down their heads and said to each other, 'Who is this with a turban on? Should we at last violate our faith by talking with him? Where is he, the lord of our soul, with his yellow robe and charming crown?'

"Do you see how wonderful their faith was? Quite unique indeed are the ways of Brindavan! I am told that, the people about Dwaraka worship Sri Krishna as the friend of Arjuna,—they reject Radha."

* Where Sri Krishna reigned as king.

A Devotee: Which is better,—the devotion of love, or the devotion of knowledge?

Sri Ramakrishna: You cannot have the devotion of love until your love of God has become very, very intense, and until you have learnt to look upon Him as your own. Three friends were passing through a forest when a tiger suddenly appeared before them. One of them cried out, 'Brothers, we are undone!' 'Why? Why undone?' the second friend exclaimed; 'come, let us pray to God!' But the third friend said, 'No, what is the use of troubling Him? Come, let us climb this tree.'

"Now, he who said that they were lost did not know that the Lord was the protector of all. But he who wished to pray to God knew that God was the creator, protector and destroyer of all. But the third friend that said that they should not trouble Him, but should climb the tree, had had love and attachment for God grown in him. And it is the nature of love that the lover always considers himself as greater than his beloved. And he is always on the alert that his beloved may not come to any harm, and ever prays in his heart of hearts that not even a thorn may prick his beloved's foot!"

Ramachandra invites the Master and the devotees upstairs and entertains them with various preparations of sweets. And the devotees partake of the Prasadam in great joy.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DAKSHINESWAR TEMPLE—JUNE, 1883

I.

In the morning of Monday, the 4th of June, 1883, Balaram and a few other devotees have come to visit Sri Ramakrishna at the Temple of Dakshineswar.

M. came here yesterday. The proprietors of the Temple with their family were also present on the occasion of the Katyayani Puja, which was celebrated here last night; and Sri Ramakrishna, filled with the ecstasy of love, stood in the Theatre Hall before the Divine Mother and prayed:

"Thou art, O Mother, verily the Katyayani of Braja! Thou art the heaven and the earth and the lower regions! Of Thee, O Mother, Hari, Brahma and the twelve Gopals were born! Thou art the ten Mahavidyas, and Thou art the ten Divine Incarnations!—This time, O Mother, Thou must take me to the other shore!"

Thus, love-intoxicated, he sang and conversed with the Mother.

And the singing of the Mother's name went on to the middle of the night.

It is nine in the morning following the celebration. The Master with a smile on his face is sitting in the circular portico beside the Ganges. M. is seated close by. For the last few days, the Master has been regarding Rakhal as the very personification of the Child Krishna. He playfully makes Rakhal lie down with his head resting on his lap. But seeing Trailokya *

* Trailokya was the son of Mathuranath and grandson of Rani Rasmani.

passing before them with his attendants, the Master says to Rakhal, "Get up! Get up!"

Trailokya approaches and makes his obeisance. Sri Ramakrishna says to him, "Well, was there no Jatra performance last night?"

Trailokya: No, it could not be arranged.

Sri Ramakrishna: What is done, is done. But you should take care that this omission is not repeated. It is desirable that tradition be maintained unbroken.

Trailokya makes suitable reply and takes his leave.

After some time, S. Ram Chatterjee, priest of the Vishnu temple, comes to the Master. The Master asks him, "Ram, I told Trailokya that this omission of the Jatra performance should not occur any more. Was I right in saying that?"

Ram: What of that, sir? You were quite right in having said so. Tradition should always be followed.

Sri Ramakrishna invites Balaram to dine with him.

For some time before the meal, the Master engages in a conversation, describing at length his own spiritual condition to Rakhal, Balaram, M., Ramlal and a few other devotees.

Sri Ramakrishna: Hazrah admonished me, saying, 'Why do you think so much of the boys?' As I was going in a carriage to Balaram's house, this thought came to my mind

and made me very anxious. So I prayed to the Divine Mother, 'O Mother, Hazrah tells me that I worry too much over Narendra and the other boys. He asks, why I think so much of them, instead of God?' And as I prayed, a vision flashed before me, showing that She Herself has become men and that She manifests Herself most clearly in a pure soul. When, after realising this vision, I came down a little from Samadhi, I felt much annoyed with Hazrah. I said, 'The fellow made me miserable!' But then I thought, 'How can I blame the poor man?—how is he to know?'

"I do know that they are Narayana Himself. When I first met Narendra I saw him to be absolutely devoid of body-consciousness.

The Master's relations with his disciples.

And no sooner did I touch him at the heart than he lost external consciousness. When he regained his senses he exclaimed, 'Oh, what have you done to me?—I have my parents!' The same thing happened again in the house of Jadu Mallik. And as days passed, I became more and more anxious to see him, and my heart began to pant for him. So I asked Bholanath, 'What has happened to me? Why do I feel like this for a Kayastha boy named Narendra?' He said, 'There is an explanation of this in the Mahabharata. When a man who has realised Samadhi comes

down to the normal plane, he enjoys himself in the company of the pure-hearted, and only in their company does his heart find peace.' When I heard this, my mind was set at ease. Sometimes I would sit alone and cry to see him!"

II.

Sri Ramakrishna: Oh the moods that passed through me! When I first realised this state, I could not say how the days and nights came and went. Men said I was mad. So they had me married. I went to the house of my father-in-law; there was much singing of the Holy Name, and Nafar and Digambar Chatterjee's father came. Sometimes I used to wonder what would be my future but again I would pray, 'Mother, if the landlords of the place honour me, then shall I consider my realisations to be true!' And they would invariably come of themselves to speak with me!

"Oh, what a state it was! The slightest cause aroused in me the thought of the Divine Ideal. I worshipped 'the Beautiful,'—in a girl of fourteen years. I saw that she was Mother Herself; I made an offering of a rupee and bowed before her.

"I attended the Ramlila performance*. I saw directly that they were Sita, Rama,

* A representation of the life and career of Rama, held as an annual festival in Northern India.

Lakshmana, Hanuman and Bibhishana! And I worshipped the actors.

"In those days I used to worship maidens, for I found, they were Mother Herself!

"One day I saw a girl in a blue garment, standing at the Bakultala. She was a prostitute; in a flash came the vision of Sita! I forgot the existence of the girl. I saw that, rescued from Lanka, Sita herself was going to Rama! And for a long time I remained in Samadhi, completely unaware of the external world.

"Once I went to the Calcutta Maidan; it was the occasion of a balloon ascent and a large crowd had assembled there. Suddenly my eyes fell upon a young English boy leaning against a tree. The very posture of his body brought before me the vision of Sri Krishna, and I went into Samadhi.

"At Shihor, I entertained the cowherd boys; I gave sweets into their hands. I saw they were verily the cowherds of Braja, and I would partake of the sweets from their hands.

"In those days, I was scarcely ever conscious. Sejo Babu invited me to make a long stay in his Janbazar house. I found while there that I was the maid-servant of the Mother Herself. The ladies of the house were quite free before me, just as women are before little children. . . .

"Even now the slightest cause rouses the consciousness of the Divine in me. Rakhal used to mutter while he made his 'japam.' On seeing that I could not contain my feelings, I would lose myself in the consciousness of God."

Sri Ramakrishna expatiates long on *Prakritibhava* *. And he says, "I once exhibited the ways of the professional woman singer to a man singer. He said to me, 'Your imitations are quite correct. How did you learn them?'" The Master then acts those ways and manners before the devotees, and none can restrain his laughter.

III.

The Master is taking rest after dinner. He is enjoying a light sleep when S. Manilal Mallik enters the room, and having saluted him, squats on the floor. The Master remains lying down, and makes occasional responses to the words of Manilal.

Manilal: Sivanath is a great admirer of Nityagopal. He says that Nityagopal has reached a high stage of spirituality.

Sri Ramakrishna: (in a sleepy tone) What do they think of Hazrah?

Now the Master sits up and listens to what Manilal says about Bhavanath's devotion.

Sri Ramakrishna: Ah, how great is his devotion! He scarcely begins to sing when

* *Prakritibhava* is worship of God as *prakriti* i.e., woman, by being His maid-servant, friend or wife.

THE PARABLE OF THE 'GOAT-TIGER' 171

his eyes become flooded with tears ! On seeing Harish, he went into ecstasy, and said, 'They are very happy.'—Harish, you know, stays here sometimes instead of at home.

"(To M.) Well, what is the cause of Bhakti? Why do Bhavanath and other boys get inflamed with God-devotion?"

M. is silent.

Sri Ramakrishna: The fact is that, though all men look alike from outside, some of them are stuffed with 'sweet condensed milk'. A number of cakes may have the same look, but some of them may be stuffed with the powder of black gram or sweet condensed milk. The desire to know God, and love and devotion to Him,—that indeed is 'the sweet condensed milk.'

The Master then utters these words of assurance:

"Some there are who think that they are bound, that they will never attain to Jnana and Bhakti. But all this fear vanishes, if the Guru be gracious. Once a tigress fell upon a flock of goats, and in trying to spring on her prey, she gave birth to a cub and died. The goats brought it up amongst them; they ate grass, the cub followed their example; they bleated, the cub also bleated; and in this way, it grew to a full height. One day, a full-grown tiger came that way and watched

Grace of the *
Guru.

with wonder the grass-eating tiger. He ran and seized it; it began to bleat. Then the tiger dragged it to the water-side and said, "Look here! look at your face in the water,—it is just like mine! And here, take this flesh!" So saying, he thrust a few pieces of flesh into its mouth. At first it would not eat them and only bleated piteously. But when it tasted blood, it began to eat. Then said the tiger, "You are now convinced that there is no difference between you and me. So come, follow me to the forest!"

"Therefore I say, all fear will vanish from your heart if you can attain the grace of your Guru. He himself will reveal to you who you are and what is the true nature of your self.

"If one practises only a little Sadhana, then the Guru makes him understand what is what. He then himself learns to distinguish the real from the unreal, and knows that God alone is eternal and that this world is ephemeral.

"One night a fisherman secretly entered a garden and cast his nets into a tank to steal fish. The owner of the garden came to know of it and surrounded the thief with his men, and came with lighted torches to catch him. The thief in the meanwhile smeared his body with ashes and sat like a Sadhu under a tree. The men searched in vain for the fisherman;

they found only an ascetic covered with ashes, sitting under a tree and deeply absorbed in meditation. Next morning the word went round that a great sage had come into so-and-so's garden. People poured in with presents of flowers and sweets to pay their respects to him, and a considerable amount of silver also began to accumulate before him. At that the fisherman thought, 'How wonderful! I am not a real Sadhu, yet they show me such reverence! Assuredly then I'll realise God, if I really become a Sadhu!'

Wonderful effect
of Sadhana.

"If a mere pretence of Sadhana brought such Illumination, what to speak of real Sadhana! Then you will surely perceive what is real and what is unreal; you will surely know that God is true and the world is false."

A devotee says to himself: "The world is unreal and the fisherman of the story also gave up the world. What then will be the fate of those awakened ones that are living in the world? Must they renounce it?"

The Master says immediately, "If a clerk is sent to jail, he no doubt serves his term, but when he is released, should he go dancing madly along the streets?—He seeks out another employment and goes on working as before. Even so, after attaining Divine Wisdom through the grace of the Guru, man can live in the world as *jivan-mukta*, 'living-free.'"

Thus does Sri Ramakrishna give his message of hope to the man of the world.

IV.

Manilal: Where shall I meditate on Him during my daily worship?

Sri Ramakrishna: The heart indeed is the holiest place. You may meditate on Him there.

Manilal is a Brahmo and believes that God is formless. To him thus says Sri Ramakrishna:

"Kuvir said, 'The Visible Lord is my mother, and the Invisible Lord is my father; whom shall I blame and whom shall I praise: Yea, both the scales are equally weighted!'

"Haladhari used to meditate on God as Sakara by day and as Nirakara by night. You may have faith either in Sakara or Nirakara. But your faith must be sincere and true.

"Shambhu Mallik would walk all the way from Baghbazar to his garden
Faith. house. When somebody once
advised him, 'The way is long
and you may meet with accidents,—why do
you not go in a carriage?' he became red in
the face and exclaimed, 'What! I left home
with His name on my lips; what danger can
there be for me?'

"Faith indeed achieves everything! I would say, 'If I see a certain person, or if a certain Temple officer speaks to me, then I

shall take all this * to be true'; and whatever I would think, would come out true!"

M. has studied English logic; and he has read in the chapter on Fallacies that belief in the coincidence of morning dreams with actual events is due to superstition. So he asks the Master, "Was there ever any exception?"

Sri Ramakrishna: No, at that time, they would be invariably fulfilled. And whatever I would believe in His name, would invariably come about. (To Manilal) But you must know, one cannot have that faith without being open and guileless.

"The bony sort of fellows, the hollow-eyed, the squint-eyed,—people with such physical signs cannot have faith easily."

It is evening. A maid-servant burns incense in the Master's room. There is complete silence and the fragrance of incense fills the place. The Master is sitting on his small cot, lost in the contemplation of the Mother. Manilal has left; M., Rakhal, and a few other devotees are sitting on the floor.

After some time, Bhagavathi, a maid-servant of the Temple proprietors, enters and salutes the Master from a distance. The Master asks her to sit down. She is a very old servant of the house of Rani Rasmani, and has been known to the Master for many years. She lived a rather impure life in her younger days.

* All this = his realisations.

Sri Ramakrishna: You are old enough now. Are you devoting your money to the entertainment of Sadhus and Vaishnavas?

Bhagavati: How can I say that?*

Sri Ramakrishna: Have you made your pilgrimage to Kashi and Brindavan?

Bhaga: How can I say that?—I have built a bathing Ghaut with my name engraved on the stone.

Sri Ramakrishna: Indeed!

Bhaga: Yes, my name, 'Srimati Bhagavati Dasi' is engraved there.

Sri Ramakrishna: (With a smile) That's very nice!

Now she feels a little encouraged and touches the sacred feet of the Master and salutes him again.

At once the Master stands up, uttering 'Govinda,' 'Govinda,' startled and tortured as it were by a scorpion-sting, and hurries up, panting, to where a jar of Ganges-water stands in a corner, and washes those parts of his feet which the maid-servant has touched.

In mute wonder, the devotees witness this strange happening; and the servant sits deeply mortified.

Infinite is the compassion of the Master! He tells her,—his every accent is full of kindness and love—"Do you always salute me

* She means 'Yes.' For it is customary not to speak about one's meritorious works.

in the ordinary way." He then sits down on the cot and tries to console her. He says, "Just hear a few songs," and sings,

"The bee of my mind has lost itself in the blue lotus of Shyama's blessed feet, lo, it has lost itself in the blue lotus of Kali's hallowed feet!

"The world's sweets that dwell in the bosom of Desire's flowers can no more allure it with their false charms.

"The golden bee of my heart has lost itself at the feet of the Mother—like has mingled with like! And the five principles and Prakriti have fled!

"Kamalakanta's hopes are realised at last. What cares he for weal or woe, now that the sea of his joy is heaving high?"

And:

"My mind was hovering like a kite in the firmament of Mother's hallowed feet, when came a gust of sin's foul wind and struck it down to earth.

"Maya disturbed its even balance by weighing down one side and I could fly the kite no more. It became entangled in the string of love for wife and children and was rent in twain.

"It lost its crest of knowledge and reeled down when I flew it up. How could it fly indeed, deprived of its head? Its six companions therefore won the race.

"It wore the ties of Love of its own free will; but when the play began, it lost its head. Nareschandra rues this game of smiles and tears; it were better, he thinks, had he not come at all!"

And again:

"Live by thyself, O mind, go not to any one. Seek in thy own place to realise thy inmost hopes.

"He is verily the Greatest Treasure and the Touchstone: jewels untold bestrew the threshold of my Fulfiller's hall."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DAKSHINESWAR TEMPLE,—FEBRUARY, 1884

I.

On Saturday, the 2nd of February, 1884, at about three in the afternoon, when M. arrives at the Temple, he finds the Master sitting on his cot, conversing with Rakhal, Mahimacharan, Hazrah and other devotees. He makes his respectful obeisance to the Master. He has brought splint, pad and lint to bandage his injured hand.

One day, Sri Ramakrishna, deeply absorbed in an ecstatic mood was going towards the 'Jhautala*', when, quite oblivious of the external world and being unaccompanied he fell down by the railing, and received serious injuries on his body and had the bones of his left hand dislocated.

Sri Ramakrishna: (to M.) Halloo! What were you ailing from? Have you come round?

M.: Yes, Sir, I have.

Sri Ramakrishna: (to Mahima) Say, if 'He is the Agent, and I am but the instrument,' then how could this happen to me?

The Master is listening to Mahimacharan who is telling the story of a visit he paid to the holy places twelve years ago. He says:

"I found a Brahmacharin living in a garden at Sicrole in Benares. He said he had been living there for twenty years, but did not know to whom it belonged! He asked me

* *Jhautala* is a group of five *Jhau* or casuarina trees, situated in the northern part of the Temple Garden.

whether I was a Government servant; when I answered, 'No,' he questioned further, 'Are you a pilgrim, then?'

"On the Nerbudda, I found a Sadhu who was repeating the Gayatri mentally and this horripilated his body! And when he repeated the Pranava and Gayatri aloud, it horripilated the bodies of all those who sat near him!"

Our Master is verily like a child! He is hungry, and asks M., "Have you brought any thing for me?"

The sight of Rakhal plunges him into Samadhi.

Slowly his Samadhi is breaking. And to facilitate his coming down to the normal plane, he says, "I shall eat *jilipi*," "I shall drink water."

Like a child he weeps out the agony of his heart to the Mother: "Brahmamayee! O Mother! why hast Thou done this to me? My hand is aching terribly!"—And he anxiously asks the devotees, "Shall I be cured?" They console him as they would a little child, saying, "Oh, yes, certainly you will be cured."

Sri Ramakrishna: (to Rakhal) True you are here to look after my person, but you are not to blame. For even had you accompanied me, you would not have gone up to the railing.

He is again plunged into Bhava and says: "Om! Om! Om!—Mother, what is this I am saying! O Mother, do not plunge me in the knowledge of Brahman and take away

my consciousness!—Do not give me Brahma-jnana; I am but Thy child.—I have fears and anxieties! I do want my Mother!—A thousand salutations to Brahmajnana! Give it to him who wants it, O mother! Anandamayee! O Mother Blissful!”

He weeps, crying loudly, “Anandamayee!” “Anandamayee!” and says: “This is the grief for which I lament, that when thou, O Mother, art here, thieves rob me, though I am wide awake!”

And he says again to the Mother: “O Mother, have I done wrong? O Mother, do I do anything?—It is Thou who dost everything. O Mother, I am but Thy instrument, Thou art the Doer!...Mother, do I cry because I suffer? No,—I lament because thieves dare to rob me, even though Thou, my Mother, art present!”

II.

The Master is laughing again and talking with the devotees, even as an ailing child sometimes forgets its illness and laughs and plays.

Sri Ramakrishna: (to Mahima and others) Verily all is vain unless you have realised God! . . . And there is nothing so precious as Viveka and Vairagya*!The devotion of the wordly-minded is but momentary, just like a drop of water on a flaming iron!—Perhaps, they see a flower and say, ‘How beautiful is the creation of God!’

* ‘Discrimination and Dispassion.’

“One must long and yearn to know God. When the son begins to clamour for his share of the heritage, his parents consult each other and mete out his portion to him at the very first. If you eagerly and yearningly pray to Him, He must respond to your prayers. He has begotten us; we must have, therefore, a share in His house. He is our own father, our own mother!—we have claims on Him! ‘Reveal Thyself or I will cut my throat!’”

The Master now teaches the devotees how to pray to the Mother.

“I used to pray to the Mother in this way: ‘Ma† Anandamayee, Thou *must* reveal Thyself!’ And sometimes I would pray, ‘O Lord of the meek! O Lord of the Universe! O Lord! am I outside Thy universe? I have neither Knowledge nor Devotion, nor the merit of austerities! I know nothing! O Lord, in Thy infinite mercy, Thou must vouchsafe me Thy vision!’”

The Master utters the prayer with such deep pathos that it penetrates the very core of the devotees’ hearts. Mahimacharan cannot restrain his tears. The Master looks at him and says, “‘O mind, if thou criest to the Mother with a sincere heart, can She tarry behind? Oh never! Never!’”

† Ma = Mother.

III.

A few devotees have come to visit the Master. They have come all the way from Sibpore to hear his blessed words,—he cannot remain silent. He tells them some of the essential truths of life and religion.

Sri Ramakrishna: God alone is true, all else is false. The master and his garden,—God and His manifestation: men see only the garden; who ever seeks the master?

A *Devotee*: Sir, what is the way?

Sri Ramakrishna: Ever to discriminate the Real from the unreal. Ever to reason that He alone is Real and that everything else is transient. And to pray to Him with a passionate longing of heart.

Devotee: But, Sir, where is the time to do it?

Sri Ramakrishna: Those who can make time should worship and meditate on Him. But those who cannot do it at all, should bow down before Him twice a day. He abides in the hearts of men; He knows what they are doing and how hard they have to work.

"Give Him the 'power of attorney.'"

"If you cannot find time to pray to Him, give Him the 'power of attorney'.

"But unless and until you have realised Him and have seen Him, it is all in vain."

A Devotee: Sir, seeing you is as good as seeing God.

Sri Ramakrishna: Never say that. It is the wave that belongs to the Ganges, not the Ganges to the waves.

“One cannot find Him until such proud egotism as ‘I am such a big man,’ or ‘I am so and so’ has vanished. Dissolve the mound of egoism with the water of Devotion and level it down to the ground.”

Devotee: Why has He detained us in the world?

Sri Ramakrishna: For the sake of creation. That is His wish;—His Maya! He has deluded you with the charm of Kamini-Kanchana.

Devotee: Why has He deluded us like that? Why has He so wished?

Sri Ramakrishna: If He grants Divine Bliss to man, he will no longer remain in the world;—and that means His creation also will come to an end.

“The grain-dealer stacks rice bags in his godown; in order to draw away the rats from the rice he puts there some puffed rice in a platter. And all night they munch and munch this puffed rice with great relish, and never search for the rice itself! But think, one seer of rice makes fourteen seers of puffed rice!.....How infinitely superior is the joy of God to that of Kamini-Kanchana! If one could think of the

Why man for-
gets God.

beauty of the Lord, even the beauty of Rambha and Tilottama* would appear to him as but the ashes of a funeral pyre."

Devotee: How is it that we do not feel any intense longing to find Him?

* *Sri Ramakrishna*: You cannot feel that longing until all your desires have been satisfied. You do not recollect the Mother of the Universe until your allotted enjoyment of Kamini-Kanchana has been completed.

"So long as the child is absorbed in play, he does not feel the want of his mother. But when his play is done, he cries out, 'Mother, take me!' Hriday's son was playing with pigeons, calling to them, 'Come, ti! ti!' But when he had had enough of the play, he began to cry. Then a stranger came and said, 'Come, I shall take you to your mother,' and he unhesitatingly climbed on his shoulders and went off.

"The Ever-perfect ones have never to enter the world. Their desire for enjoyment has been satisfied even with their birth!"

At 5 P. M. Doctor Madhu comes to bandage the hand of the Master.

The Master is laughing like a child and tells him, "You are the Madhusudan of both this and the next world!" †

Madhu: (smiling) I only labour under the weight of my name.

* Celestial nymphs.

† That is he is *Madhusudan* both in his human and divine aspects, Madhusudan being one of the names of the Lord.

Sri Ramakrishna: (smiling) Why, is 'name' insignificant? He and His name are not different. Satyabhama failed to balance the Lord with gold and jewels. But Rukmini succeeded when she placed a Tulasi leaf and the name of Krishna on the other side.

The power of
the Holy Name.

The Doctor will now apply splint and bandage to the broken hand of the Master. A bed is made on the floor, and as the Master laughingly lies down on it, he sings:

"This is the tenth stage of Rai. Says Brinde, 'Who knows, what is yet to be?'"

The devotees sit round the bed. The Master sings again:

"And all the friends came and sat by the lake!"

And they all laugh out.

After the splint has been applied, he says, "I have no very firm faith in the Calcutta doctors. When Shambhu became delirious, the doctor said it was a mere intoxication caused by the medicine and nothing else. And a while after, he died!"

IV.

Evening service is done in the temples. Some time after Adhar arrives from Calcutta and makes his obeisance at the feet of the Master. Only Mahimacharan, Rakhal and M. are present in the room, and Hazra is occasionally coming in to them.

Adhar: How are you?

Sri Ramakrishna: (affectionately) See what

has become of my hand! (Smilingly) How I am doing indeed!

Adhar is sitting on the floor with the others; the Master speaks to him. "Will you stroke these a little?" Adhar sits upon the cot and strokes the Master's sacred feet.

The Master says to Mahimacharan, "It will be very nice if you practise 'Reasonless Devotion.'

"I seek neither Mukti, nor fame, nor money, nor cure from disease. I Reasonless love. seek Thee alone, O Lord!"—This is Reasonless Devotion. Many are the persons that come to the Babu always with a motive in their minds. But if any one visits him without any motive and only because he loves him, the Babu also becomes lovingly disposed towards him.

"Prahlada's was Reasonless Love, pure disinterested love of God."

Mahimacharan does not make any response. So the Master says to him, "All right, I shall speak to you according to your own mood. Listen.

"According to the Vedanta, one has to know his Self. But one cannot do it unless he renounces the 'ego.' This ego is like a stick laid on the surface of water, seeming to divide it into two portions:—'I' am one person and 'you' are another. When you realise Samadhi and your ego disappears, then you perceive Brahman in your consciousness."

Hearing this, some of the devotees perchance think within themselves, "Has the Master attained Brahmajnanam? If he has attained it, why does he say 'I', 'I'?"

The Master continues: "'I am Mahim Chakravarti, I am learned,'—this 'I' has to be renounced. But there is no harm in the 'ego' of Vidya*. Sankaracharya retained this 'ego of Vidya' for the teaching of mankind.

"And one must be very cautious about woman or he cannot attain Chastity. to the Knowledge of Brahman. Hence it is that Brahmajnana is so difficult of realisation in the world. Howsoever clever you may be, if you live in a sooty room you cannot avoid being stained with black. The society of a young woman evokes lust even in a lustless mind!

"The Sannyasin must not see even the picture of a woman. He must not talk with a woman while sitting together, even if she be supremely pious. No, he must never accost a woman, howsoever strong may be his self-control.

"The Sannyasin must renounce both Kamini and Kanchana; and just as he must not see pictures of women, even so he must not touch Kanchana, that is to say, money. Even the proximity of money is harmful!

The renunciation of the Sannyasin—its significance.

* Ego illumined and purified by Knowledge.

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For it brings in its train, calculation, anxiety, insolence of wealth and anger, and all such evils. And the shining sun becomes enshrouded by clouds.

“That is why, when the Marwari wanted to deposit some money for me with Hriday, I said, ‘No, not even that. If it be near me, it will certainly raise clouds.’

“Why all this strictness for a Sannyasin? It is both for his own good and for the good of mankind. The Sannyasin may be perfectly unattached himself and may have full control over his senses, yet to set an example to mankind, he must make such a rigorous renunciation of Kamini-Kanchana. For only when men notice the thoroughness of the Sannyasin’s renunciation will they take courage; only then will they make efforts to renounce Kamini-Kanchana. And who indeed will impart this lesson on Renunciation if not a Sannyasin?

“You may live in the world after having realised God. After churning out the butter, you may keep it in water. Only after attaining Brahmajnanam did Janaka live in the world. He wielded two swords, one of Jnana and the other of Karma. The Sannyasin renounces work; he has therefore only one sword, that of Jnana.

“Indeed, a Jnani householder like Janaka can taste fruits both from the upper and the

lower branches of the tree! He can perform such Karmas as serving Sadhus and entertaining guests. I said to the Mother, 'Mother, I won't be a dry Sadhu.'

"After one has realised Brahman, one has to observe no longer any discrimination as to food. A Brahmajnani Rishi, having attained the bliss of Brahman, was allowed to eat anything, even bacon. .

"(To Mahima) There are two principal kinds of Yoga, (1) Karma Yoga and (2) Mano Yoga; that is to say, union with God through Karma, and through mind.

Brahmacharya, Garhasthya, Vanaprastha, Sannyasa—*in the first three of these institutions work is compulsory. The Sannyasin assumes the *Danda*, the *Kamandalu* † and the begging bowl. He performs certain daily rituals, but his mind is not attached to them—he is not conscious of them. Some Sannyasins keep up a few of these daily ceremonials as an example to the householders. If any one belonging to the institution of Garhasthya, or to any of these institutions, for the matter of that, practises work without attachment, he attains Union with the Divine through Karma Yoga.

* Life of continence, Life of the householder, Life in the forest and Life of complete renunciation. † Wand and Water-vessel.

“In the state of the Paramahamsa, like that of Sukadeva, all Karma—Puja, Japam, Tarpanam or Sandhya—drops off. Then the Union with God is only through the mind. He may be pleased sometimes to perform outward actions only for the good of mankind. But he maintains unbroken the constant recollection and contemplation of God.”

V.

By this time it is 8 o'clock at night. The Master requests Mahimacharan to recite a few hymns from the Scriptures. Mahimacharan takes up a book and begins with the very first stanza of the 'Uttara Gita,' descriptive of the Supreme Brahman:

“He, the Brahman, is one and undivided. He is stainless and transcends Akasha. He has neither birth nor death, nor can He be comprehended or reasoned out.”

And thus he reads on till he comes to the seventh stanza of the third chapter, which says:

“Fire is the Deity of the twice-born. The Deity of the sages is in their own hearts. The Deity of the ignorant is the image. But the Deity of those who have attained same-sightedness is everywhere.”

These last words—‘But the Deity of those who have attained same-sightedness is everywhere,’ are scarcely out of the reciter's lips, when Sri Ramakrishna steps down from his seat, and standing, goes into Samadhi. His

hand is supported with a splint and bandage. And the devotees look on in supreme wonder at this revelation of the state of same-sightedness!

After a long time, the Master comes down to the normal plane and resumes his seat. He asks Mahima to recite the famous passage on 'Hari-Bhakti,' from 'Narada Pancharatra'. He recites:

"If thou dost see the Lord in and out, what is the need of any penance? If indeed thou seest not Him inside and outside thyself, what is the profit of all thy penance? If thou dost indeed worship the Lord, what need is there for any penance? And if thou dost not offer worship unto Him, what avails thy penance? O Brahmin, O my child, cease from thy austerities. Hasten to Sankara who is the Ocean of Knowledge, and seek of Him that perfect Bhakti of the Lord, of which the Vaishnavas have spoken and which snaps and sunders the strong fetters that bind men to the world."

Sri Ramakrishna: Aha! Aha!

The recitation has filled the Master with ecstatic emotions, but he suppresses them with a great effort.

Mahima is reading the '*Yati-panchakam*'—'five stanzas on the Sannyasin':

"I am She in whom this cosmic illusion has been evoked, and in whom all things, animate and inanimate, become manifest, being

created by the mind. I am She, I am self-consciousness, I am the Self of the Universe, I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute!"

"I am She, I am self-consciousness!"

Hearing this portion, the Master 'remarks, "Whatever is in the microcosm is also in the macrocosm!"

'The six stanzas on Nirvana' is being recited:

"I am neither the mind, nor the intellect, nor the ego, nor the mind-stuff; I am neither the body, nor the changes of the body; I am neither the senses of hearing, taste, smell or sight, nor am I the ether, the earth, the fire, the air;—I am Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute;—I am He, I am He!"

But every time Mahimacharan recites the refrain, 'I am Knowledge Absolute, I am Bliss Absolute, I am He, I am He!' the Master rejoins, "Not I, Not I; it is Thou, Thou art Chidananda,—the Knowledge Absolute, the Bliss Absolute!"

Mahima then reads out a portion from the Jivan-Mukti Gita—'the Song of the Living free'—and then a description of the six psychic centres, and says that he himself had been a witness to a death at Benares in which a Yogi passed away in a state of superconsciousness.....

Mahima: There are many fine passages in the 'Rama Gita.'

Sri Ramakrishna: (smiling) You talk of Rama Gita! You are a strict Vedantin, indeed! The Sadhus used to read so many things here.

Mahima is reading out a description of 'the Pranava *';—it is 'like an unceasing flow of oil, like a long peal of a bell.' And then the signs of Samadhi,—

"The above is filled with Atman, the below is filled with Atman, the middle is filled with Atman,—and he himself is Atman. This is the sign of one who is immersed in Samadhi."

And by and by Adhar and Mahimacharan offer their farewell salutations at the feet of the Master and depart.

VI.

At noon the next day, the Master is sitting on his cot after his dinner. Ram, Surendra and other devotees have hastened to Dakshineswar on receiving the news of the accident. They and M. are seated on the floor. The Master is talking with them; his hand is still bandaged.

Sri Ramakrishna: Mother has placed me in such a state that I cannot hide anything from anybody. Mine is the condition of a child.

"Rakhal does not comprehend my mood. He covers my broken hand with a cloth, lest men should see it and speak ill of me. He took Doctor Madhu aside to speak of the

* *Pranava* is the sacred syllable, A-U-M.

injury. I then shouted out, 'Halloo, Madhusudan, where are you? Come here and see; my hand is broken.'

"I used to sleep in the same room with Sejo Babu and Sejo Ginni*. They looked after me as they would their own child. I was then in the mad state of Divine Ecstasy. Sejo Babu used to ask me, 'Baba, do you hear our talk?' I would reply, 'Yes, I do.'

Master's truthfulness.

"Sejo Ginni was suspicious of Sejo Babu's character. So she enjoined him, 'If you go anywhere, Bhattacharjee Mahasay must accompany you.' One day he went to a certain place and bade me wait downstairs. After half an hour, he came down and said, 'Come, Baba, let us get into the carriage.' When Sejo Ginni asked me about it, I told her exactly what had occurred. I said, 'Do you know, we went to a certain house; he asked me to wait downstairs while he went upstairs. Half an hour after he came down and said to me, 'Come Baba, let us go.' Sejo Ginni, of course, made some meaning out of it.

"A partner of the Marhs† used to clandestinely remove to his own home in a carriage some of the fruits and cabbages produced in this garden. When the other partners asked me about it, I told them the exact truth."

* *Sejo Babu*—Mathur Babu, son-in-law of Rani Rasmani; and Sejo Ginni is his wife, the Rani's daughter.

† This is the caste to which Rani Rasmani belonged.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DAKSHINESWAR TEMPLE,—FEBRUARY, 1884

I.

Sunday, the 24th of February, 1884.

Sri Ramakrishna is enjoying his noonday repose; his left hand is still supported by a splint. M. enters and makes his salutation at the Master's holy feet and sits near Mani Mallik on the floor.

Sri Ramakrishna: (to M.) How did you come here?

M.: I came to Alambazar in a carriage and from there I walked to the garden.

Mani Mallik: Oh! he has heavily perspired!

Sri Ramakrishna: (laughingly) So I say, all this is not the figment of my brain, or why should these 'Englishmen *' take so much pains to come here?

The talk turns on the Master's health and his broken hand. Says he, "I sometimes lose all patience, and show my hand to this and that man and ask, 'Tell me, will it be cured?'"

"Rakhal gets angry—he does not understand my mood. Now and then I think he had better go away from here; but immediately I say to the Mother, 'Mother, where will he go? Where would he not suffer troubles and tribulations?'"

"This child-like impatience of mine is

* 'Englishmen' is an epithet which the Master applied to those whose ways and modes of life were largely influenced by English ideas or who had received an English education.

nothing new. I would tell Sejo Babu to feel my pulse, and ask him petulantly, 'Do you think I am ill?'

"But where then is my faith in God? One day I was going to the country in a bullock cart, when some dacoit-like men with clubs in hand came to our cart. I began to repeat the Holy Names. Now I repeated the name of Rama, now of Durga, and again, 'Om Tat Sat,' so that if one failed, another might fit in! (To M.) Well, why am I so impatient?"

M.: You are always in the superconscious state; you have retained only a small part of your mind on the body, for the sake of the Bhaktas. That is why you sometimes become impatient for the safety of your body.

Sri Ramakrishna: Yes, a little of my mind is indeed attached to the body and so desires to live with Bhakti and the Bhaktas.

Mani Mallik is speaking of the Exhibition in the Calcutta Maiden, where a very beautiful image of Yashoda with the Child Krishna on her lap is being exhibited. This draws tears from the Master's eyes. The very mention of the name has filled his heart with the consciousness of Yashoda, who is the very embodiment of maternal love, and he is crying.

Manilal: You are ill, or you could go to see it.

Sri Ramakrishna: If I go, I won't be able to see all. Perhaps I should see some-

thing and become unconscious and other things would remain unvisited.

"They took me to the Zoological Garden. But at the very sight of the lion, I went into Samadhi,—the sight of the Mother's vehicle filled me with an intense consciousness of the Mother Herself! Who cared to see other animals? So I finished my visit with seeing the lion and came back.

"For that reason Jadu Mallik's mother says sometimes, that she will take me to the Exhibition, and at other times she refuses."

Mani Mallik is an old Brahmo, nearly sixty-five years old. The Master instructs him according to his mood.

Sri Ramakrishna: Pandit Jayanarayan was very liberal. When I visited him, I found him a man of nice religious conceptions. His sons were all wearing boots. But he said, 'I shall retire to Benares.' And he did as he said; he lived and died in Benares.

"It is very good to retire from the world like that when one becomes old, and think of the Lord. What do you say?"

Manilal: Yes, the troubles of the world are unbearable.

Sri Ramakrishna: Gauri used to worship his wife with flower-offerings. Every woman is indeed an embodiment of the Mother Herself. (To Manilal) Just tell him that little story of yours.

Manilal: (Smiling) Some men were crossing a river in a boat. One of them was a great scholar, and to display his learning, he said, 'I have read various Scriptures, the Vedas, the Vedanta, and the six systems of philosophy. And he asked one man, 'Have you studied the Vedanta?' He replied, 'No.' "Do you know the Sankhya and the Patanjali philosophies?" 'No, sir.' 'So you have studied no philosophy?' 'No sir.' Thus the Pandit talked on proudly and the other man sat silent. Soon after a great storm arose and the boat began to sink. Then said the man to the Pandit, 'Panditji, can you swim?' The Pandit confessed he did not know how. The man rejoined, 'I do not know your Sankhya and Patanjali, but I do know how to swim.'

Sri Ramakrishna: (Smilingly) What will it profit even if you know the various Scriptures? The one thing needful is to know how to cross the river of the world. God alone is real, everything else is unreal.

"When Arjuna aimed his arrow at the mark, Dronacharya asked him, 'What do you see? Do you see these kings?' Arjuna replied, 'No.' 'Do you see me?' 'No.' 'Do you see the tree?' 'No.' 'Do you see the bird on the tree?' 'No.' 'What do you see then?' 'I see only the eye of the bird.'

"And he alone can hit the mark who sees only the eye of the bird.

“He alone is clever who sees that God is the only reality.

“Said Hanuman, ‘I know neither the phases of the moon nor the position of the stars; I think of Rama alone.’

“(To M.) Buy a few fans for use here.

“(To Manilal) Look here, go to his* father once. The sight of a devotee will be inspiring.”

II.

The Master is sitting on his cot. Manilal and other devotees are seated on the floor listening to the words of Divine Wisdom that drop from his hallowed lips. Says the Master to M., “Since the fracture of my hand, a deep change has come over me. I feel highly inclined to ‘Naralila.’

“Nitya and Lila:—Nitya is the Undivided Existence - Knowledge - Bliss. And Lila, or sport, takes various forms, such as Lila as God, Lila as gods, Lila as man, Lila as the creation.

“Vaishnav-Charan used to tell me that Perfect Knowledge comes only with faith in ‘Naralila’. I did not believe him then, but now I find it all true. Of man’s pictures he used to prefer those which expressed soft feelings, feelings of love.

“(To Manilal) It is God Himself who is sporting in the forms of men. He
 Naralila. Himself has become Mani Mallik.

* That is to say, M.’s.

"The Sikhs teach, 'Thou art Sachchidananda.'

"Man sometimes catches a glimpse of his real Self, and then he is overcome with mute wonder and his joy knows no bounds, as if he had met a dear one all on a sudden!

"(To M.) It is just as I felt the other day on seeing Baburam, when I was coming in a carriage; you were with me then.

"When Siva sees His real Self, He exclaims, 'What am I?' 'What am I?' and dances!

"It is written in the Adhyatma*. Narada said, 'O Rama, all men are thine own selves, and it is Sita who has become all women.

"All those who acted in the Ramlila appeared to me as Narayana Himself assuming those human forms. The real and the imitation appeared as one.

"Why do men worship virgins? Because women are so many images of the Mother, and She manifests Herself in the greatest measure in a pure-hearted virgin.

"(To M.) Why do I lose all patience when I am ill? Because She has put me in the state of the child, and the child depends in every way on its mother.

"When the child of a maid-servant quarrels with her master's child, it says, 'I'll tell my mother.'

* i.e., Adhyatma Ramayanam.

“They took me to Radhabazar to have me photographed and it was arranged that we would that day call at Rajendra Mitra’s, where Keshab Sen and others were also to come. And I resolved I would tell them certain things. But when I reached Radhabazar, I totally forgot everything! Then I said, ‘Mother, is Thou who wilt say! What shall I say?’

“Mine is not the nature of the Jnani. He considers himself great, and says, ‘I, to have disease!’

“Koar Singh said to me, ‘You still think of your body!’

“My nature is to believe that my Mother knows everything. It is She who spoke at Rajendra Mitra’s. And that speech indeed is the true speech! One single ray of the knowledge of Saraswati can confound a thousand scholars!

“She has placed me in the state of a Bhakta, of a Vijnani. Hence it is that I can joke and make fun with Rakhal and others. Had I been in the condition of a Jnani, that would not have been possible.

“In this condition of mine I see that Mother Herself has become all this. I see Her everywhere.

“In the Kali temple, I found that Mother has become even the wicked—even the brother

of the Bhagavat Pandit!*

"I failed when I essayed to rebuke Ramlal's mother. I found she was Mother in another form. It is because I find the Mother in the maidens that I worship them.

"My wife strokes my feet, but I salute her afterwards.

"You touch my feet by way of salutation, but had Hride been here, who would have dared to touch my feet? He would never have allowed it.

"And because I am placed in such a condition, I have to return your salutes.

"You see, I cannot ignore even a wicked man. A Tulasi leaf, however dry or small, can be offered to the Deity!"

* This, of course, is an allusion to a certain man known to the Master.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DAKSHINESWAR TEMPLE,—MARCH, 1884

I.

The Master is sitting on the smaller cot in his well-known chamber, listening to S. Trailokya Sannyal of the Brahmo Samaj sing of the Lord. The Master has not yet recovered from the effects of the accident; his hand is still supported by a splint.

It is Sunday, the 2nd of March, 1884. Narendra, Surendra Mitra, and M., and many other devotees are squatting on the floor, enjoying the music.

Narendra has lately lost his father, who was an attorney of the Calcutta High Court. This unfortunate loss has involved the family in such extreme financial difficulties that they have sometimes to face even starvation. Narendra is passing his days in great worry and anxiety.

Trailokya is singing to the Mother: "O Mother, take me into Thy loving embrace! Hide me in Thy bosom and protect me under Thy affectionate skirt!"

As the Master hears this, he breaks into ecstatic tears, and cries out, "Ah! what sentiments!"

And again Trailokya sings: "O Lord! Thou art the custodian of my honour! Who cares what man may say of me? Do Thou ever remain pleased with me!"

Tears of love rain copiously from the Master's eyes. He comes down from the cot to the floor and sings:

"Honour or disgrace, sweet or bitter, — it is all Thine, O Mother, Ruler of all feelings, abiding in them, why dost Thou hinder, when I enjoy sweet ecstasy?"

Says the Master to Trailokya, "Ah! how beautiful are your songs! They are indeed real and genuine. He alone can fetch seawater who has gone to the sea!"

Trailokya resumes singing:

"O Lord, it is Thou who dancest, Thou who singest! It is Thou who dost clap Thy hands! Man is but a passive witness!"

The singing over, the Master says,—

"God is the lord, and He again is the servant,—to have such an idea is a sign of Perfect Knowledge. First, by a process of negation one comes to feel that God alone is true and all else false. But he finds eventually that God Himself has become the Maya, the individuals, the world and everything. It is the process of Involution followed by the process of Evolution. This doctrine is enunciated by the Puranas. A Bilwa* fruit, for instance, is made up of kernel, seeds and shell; when you want the kernel, you remove the seeds and the shell; but if you seek to determine its total weight you cannot leave them out of count. In the same way when a man seeks to realise God, he first elimi-

The Absolute identical with the phenomenal world.

* Aegle Marmelos or wood-apple.

nates the Jiva-Jagat, the individuals and the world; but when he has realised Him he finds that He Himself has become this Jiva-Jagat. It is of the same one substance that the kernel as well as the seeds and the shell are made, just as the butter is of the butter-milk, and the butter-milk is of the butter. But then, some may argue, how can the Sachchidananda become so 'hard'!—for this earth does feel very hard to the touch. The reply is that blood and semen are only thin liquids, but even out of them comes such a large animal of a man. Indeed, everything may come out of Him! First, reach the Lord, the Undivided Existence-Knowledge-Bliss and then come down back to the phenomenal world and perceive it as His manifestation.

"It is He who has become all this. The world is not a separate entity from Him. When Rama studied the Vedas with his Guru, he was filled with intense Vairagyam, and declared that since the world was like a dream, he had better renounce the world. This greatly alarmed Dasaratha, so he sent his Guru Vasistha to pacify him. Vasistha said to Rama, 'Why do you want to renounce the world? Prove to me that the world is outside God. If you can convince me that the world is derived from other sources than God, you are free to give it up.' Rama remained silent; he could find no answer to the argument.

"All principles finally merge in the principle of Akasha. It is from this principle of Akasha that at the next creation the principle of Mahat derives its existence; from this, again, the principle of Ego is derived; and thus and thus, till the whole world is evolved.

"It is Involution succeeded by Evolution.

The Bhakta accepts all; he accepts both the Jiva-Jagat and the Akhanda* Sachchidananda.

"The path of the Yogi, however, is quite different. When he reaches the Paramatman, he does not return; he becomes one with It.

"He who sees God in one limited aspect is a Khanda† Jnani; he thinks God cannot exist in other aspects.

"There are three classes of Bhaktas. The lowest Bhakta says, 'God is up there;' that is, he points to the sky. The mediocre Bhakta affirms that He abides in every heart as the Antaryamin‡. But the highest Bhakta says, 'It is He who has become all this. Whatever objects I see are but so many forms of the same Lord.' Formerly Narendra used to ridicule me, saying, 'It is He who has become all this!—then a pot is God, a cup is God!' [Laughter.]

"If you but see Him,* all your doubts will

* 'Undivided.'

† 'Partial or divided.'

‡ The Supreme Spirit in His aspect as the Regulator and Controller of the individual souls.

vanish. It is one thing to learn from hearsay, quite another thing to see. You cannot have perfect faith by merely hearing of Him, but if you see Him face to face, nothing remains to perfect your faith.

“With God-realisation, all Karma drops off. It was thus that my ceremonial worship came to an end. I used to perform worship in the Kali temple. One day, it was suddenly revealed that everything was *Chinmaya*—Pure Spirit! The Puja utensils, altar, door-case,—all were Spirit! Men, beasts, birds, everything was Chinmaya! And mad-like I would rain flowers all around! Whatever I saw I worshipped!

“One day, in course of Siva-worship, I was putting the *Bajra* on the Siva-lingam, when the revelation came that the universe itself is Siva. That day ended my worship of Siva by making His images.

“I was plucking flowers, when suddenly it was revealed that the flower plants themselves were so many nose-gays!”

Trailokya: Ah! How beautiful is God's creation!

Sri Ramakrishna: No, no,—it flashed clearly before me! I did not reason it out.

Art vs. Realisation, I saw that each plant was a nose-gay adorning the universal form of God! That was my last flower-gathering.

"I see men also in the same way. He Himself appears to be undulating with the human body, just like a pillow floating on the waves, moving on in a zig-zag course, but alternately rising and falling with the waves!

"The body is verily for 'two days.' He alone is real, the body is evanescent. Many days ago, when I was suffering from chronic diarrhoea, Hride advised me to pray to the Mother for cure. But I felt ashamed to speak of my disease to the Mother. So I said, 'O Mother, I saw the bones of a man in the Society* pieced together with wire into a skeleton. Likewise, O Mother, make my body a little stronger that I may sing Thy name and praise!'

"Why this desire to live? When Ravana fell, Rama and Lakshmana entered the city of Lanka. But on going to Ravana's palace, they found his mother Nikasha running away. This very much astonished Lakshmana. He exclaimed, 'Rama, she has lost all her people, yet she is so much attached to life!' Rama called her near him and said, 'Fear not. Why were you flying away?' 'Rama,' she replied, 'being afraid was not why I fled. Because I have lived long, therefore have I enjoyed so much of your Leela; if I live longer, I can see still more. Hence I desire to live.'

"Verily the ways of God are inscrutable!

* Asiatic Society of Calcutta.

"The body cannot live in the state of desirelessness.

"(Smilingly) I had a few desires. I said to the Mother, 'Grant me the society of those who have renounced Kamini-Kanchana!' And I said, 'I desire to enjoy the company of Thy Jnanis and Bhaktas. So give me a little strength to walk and visit different places!' She has, however, refused me power to go about."

Trailokya: Are your desires fulfilled?

Sri Ramakrishna: (smiling) A bit remains yet unfulfilled. The body is verily for 'two days'! When my hand was broken, I complained to the Mother, 'Mother, I suffer terribly!' At once She sent me a vision of a carriage and an engineer; a few screws had got loose from the carriage, but it was moving just as the engineer drove it,—it had no power of its own.

"Why then do I take care of the body? Because I want to enjoy God!—I want to sing His name and praise, and to live with His Jnanis and Bhaktas."

II.

Narendra is sitting in front of the Master.

Says *Sri Ramakrishna*: "The joys and sorrows of the body are inevitable. Just see Narendra,—his father has passed away, and his people are in extreme straits, and he has no means to alleviate their wants. God sometimes keeps us in happiness, sometimes in misery."

Trailokya: God will have compassion on him.

Sri Ramakrishna: (smiling) Say, when? In the Annapurna Temple at Benares, nobody goes without having something to eat; but some have to wait till nightfall!

"Hride one day sought a little money of Shambhu Mallik. Now Shambhu Mallik held English opinions; he said, 'Why should I give to you? You can work and are earning. Of course, if a man is very poor or blind or lame, that is a different thing,—any charity in that case won't be amiss.' At that Hride said, 'Sir, don't you say that. I do not want your money. May God grant that I do not become blind or lame or poor! Neither need you give, nor need I receive.'"

The Master is aggrieved at the succour of God being still withheld from Narendra. He casts affectionate glances at him from time to time.

Narendra: I am now studying atheistic doctrines.

Sri Ramakrishna: There are two aspects, *Asti* and *Nasti*,—Being and Non-being. Why not take the Being aspect?

Surendra: God is just,—He must look after His devotees.

Sri Ramakrishna: Thus goes the law:—Those who bestowed large charities in a former life are born rich in this. But then, this

world is His Maya, and the process of Maya is beset with many irregularities,—none can comprehend it. ,

“Verily the ways of God are inscrutable!

The ways of
God are inscrut-
able.

While Bhishmadeva lay on his bed of arrows, the Pandavas came to visit him with Sri Krishna. After a short time, they found to their astonishment that he was weeping. They exclaimed, ‘O Krishna, it is very strange! He is one of the eight Vasus and is unrivalled in his wisdom. Even he is overcome by Maya and is crying in his dying hour!’ Krishna said, ‘That is not why he weeps,—you just ask him.’ So they inquired of Bhishma why he was crying. He replied, ‘O Krishna, I cannot understand in the least the ways of God! I weep because I see that even the Pandavas, who are ever attended by Narayana Himself, have no end to their sufferings. When I think of this, I find that His ways baffle all comprehension!’

“It was revealed to me that the Paramatman, whom the Vedas declare to be the Shuddha Atman, the Pure Self, alone is steady and immovable, even as the Mt. Sumeru. He alone is unaffected and transcends joy and sorrow. But the workings of His Maya are very irregular,—you cannot say, ‘this’ will necessarily come out of ‘that’, or ‘this’ will necessarily be succeeded by ‘that’.”

Surendra: (laughingly) If it is true that charities of one birth give wealth in the next, then we should bestow charities.

Sri Ramakrishna: Those who can afford, should do them. (To Trailokya) Jaygopal Sen is rich; he should be charitable. He is certainly to be condemned for not being so. Some there are who, though rich, are miserly. There is no knowing who will enjoy their wealth!

"Jaygopal came here the other day. He drove over here in a carriage the lamps of which were broken; the horse seemed to be procured from a charnel house; the coachman was perhaps just discharged from the Medical College Hospital, and the two pomegranates he brought to this place were rotten!" [Laughter.]

Surendra: He belongs to the Brahmo Samaj. It is said that Keshab Babu's following is now much reduced. Bijoy Goswami, Sivanath and other Babus have organised the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj.

Sri Ramakrishna: (smilingly) Govinda Adhikari*, it is said, never entertained any qualified men in his party, lest they might ask for a share in the profits. [Laughter.]

"The other day I saw a follower of Keshab. They acted a drama at Keshab Sen's, and he danced on the stage with a child in his arms. I am told he also lectures. He had better lecture to himself!"

* The chief of a well-known opera party of Calcutta.

CHAPTER XVII.
THE DAKSHINESWAR TEMPLE, — MARCH, 1884.

I.

It is the 23rd of March, 1884. The Master has finished his poonday meal and is sitting in his well-known chamber with Rakhal, Ram and a few other devotees. He has not yet recovered his health; his hand is still bandaged.

But in spite of his illness, our Master's joy knows no bounds. Devotees daily flock to him from all quarters, and in great joy he talks to them of the Lord. Sometimes he sings His praise in over-flowing bliss, and again, to the eternal wonder of the beholders, he plunges into Samadhi and drinks deep of the ineffable bliss of Brahman!

Says Ram, "They are negotiating a marriage between Narendra and R. Mitra's daughter. Mitra has offered a large dowry."

Sri Ramakrishna: (smiling) Yes, it will perhaps come to something like that. And then perchance he will become a leader. Indeed, he would turn out something great whichever way he goes.

The Master does not allow the talk to proceed any further on Narendra.

Sri Ramakrishna: (to Ram) Well, why do I lose all patience when I am ill? I ask this man and that man how I shall be cured!

"The fact is, I must believe either all or none at all."

"It is He who has become the doctors, so I must believe them. But when I look upon them as human, I do not have any faith in them.

"Shambhu was terribly delirious, but Sarbadhikari said it was due to the strong medicine! Haladhari had his pulse examined by the doctor. He said, "Let me see your eyes,—oh, enlargement of the spleen!" But Haladhari declared that there was no such thing.

"Doctor Madhu gives nice medicines."

Ram: Medicine can do no good. It only helps Nature to a certain extent.

Sri Ramakrishna: If it be so, why then does opium stop motion?

Ram alludes to the passing away of Keshab Ch. Sen, saying, "You were quite right, Sir, when you said that the gardener uncovers the roots of the rose plant, if it is of a superior variety, that it may absorb the dew and grow vigorously. Has not the prophecy been fulfilled?"

Sri Ramakrishna; I don't know; I never ventured it. It is you who say so.

Ram: They wrote about you in their paper.

Sri Ramakrishna: To write? What is this? Why write now? I live by myself; I don't know anything.

"I asked Keshab Sen why he wrote about me. He said he did so that men might come to me.

“It is not the power of man that teaches men. Without the power Divine, Avidya can never be vanquished.

“Once Hanuman Singh and a Punjabi Mussalman engaged in a wrestling competition. The Mussalman was a strong and stout man, and for fifteen days before the wrestling, and even on that day, fed lustily on meat and Ghee, and all thought he would win. But Hanuman Singh was clad in a dirty cloth; he ate sparingly for some days and repeated the name of the Lord, and on the day of the match he fasted completely, and all thought he was certain to be defeated.

“But it was he who won. And he who fed and feasted for fifteen days was vanquished!

“What can writing and publishing do? He who will teach mankind must get his power from God. And, again, if he does not completely renounce the world, he can never be the teacher of men.

“I am the greatest ignoramus!” [All laugh.]

A Devotee: Why then do the Veda and the Vedanta, and many things besides, come from your lips?

Sri Ramakrishna: (smilingly) Because in my childhood I could grasp whatever I heard the Sādhus read in the house of the Laha family; though it is true I misquote a little sometimes.

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"If any Pandit speaks in Sanskrit, I can understand him; but I myself cannot speak it.

"To realise Him is the only end of life. When Arjuna aimed his arrow at the mark he said, 'I see nothing but the eye of the bird, I see neither the princes, nor the trees, nor even the bird itself.'

God's love
waits not for
scholarship.

"I am content if I have realised Him; what if I do not know Sanskrit?

"He bestows His mercy equally on all His children who yearn to know Him, be they learned, or ignorant. Suppose a father has a few children. Some of them can call him 'Papa'; others perhaps can say only 'Ba' or 'Pa' and cannot pronounce the whole word. But will the father love the latter less than the former? He knows that they are mere infants and cannot distinctly call him 'father.' The father, indeed, loves them all in equal measure.

"Since this accident to my hand, a great change has come over me,—my mind is greatly tending towards 'Naralila'. He Himself is sporting as human beings!

"If we can worship Him in earthen images, can we not worship Him in human beings?

"Once a merchant suffered shipwreck near the coast of Ceylon and floated to its shore. When, by the orders of Bibhishana, the man was brought before him, Bibhishana

exclaimed, 'Ah, he is the very image of my Ramachandra,—the same human form!' and lost himself in exceeding joy. He then adorned him with precious robes and jewels and offered him worship.

"I cannot tell you how I enjoyed the story when I first heard it.

"On inquiring of him Vaishnava Charan once told me that if any one thinks of his beloved as God Himself, his mind will speedily be drawn towards God. 'Whom dost thou love?' 'I love so-and-so.' 'Then know him to be thy God.' When I went to those parts*, I said, 'I do not hold these opinions. Mine is the filial attitude.'

"I found that those people talk big things, but lead immoral lives. The women asked me if they would not have salvation. I said, 'Yes, you may have salvation if you remain faithful to a single man as your God; but not if you live with five men.'"[†]

Ram: Kedar Babu, it seems, has been to the 'Kartabhajas.'

* That is, Shyam Bazar, near Kamarpukur.

† The reference is to certain minor sects of Vaishnavism called *Kartabhaja*, *Navarasik*, etc., who teach that men and women should live together in the relation of love, looking upon each other as divine, thereby idealising their love, and eventually realising it as the very love of God. The doctrine is undoubtedly very difficult of realisation, and moral lapses amongst its adherents are consequently not to be wondered at. For fuller information regarding these sects and Vaishnava Charan, see p. 217, Vol. II, *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*.

Sri Ramakrishna: He gathers honey from various flowers!

"'He indeed is my Istam,'—if you can have this perfect faith you will realise Him, you will see Him.

"Men of previous generations had very strong faith. Oh, how tremendous was the faith of Haladhari's father! He was going to his daughter's place when he found some very nice flowers and Bilwa leaves growing by the roadside. He gathered them and came all the way back to his house, nearly five miles, to worship the Deity.

"An opera party was acting the story of Rama. Kaikeyi asked Rama to retire to the forests. When Haladhari's father, who was amongst the audience, heard this, he sprang up, and coming forward to him who was acting the part of Kaikeyi, cried out, 'You evil thing!' and tried to burn his face with a lamp.

"At the time of bathing he would meditate, reciting the invocation, 'I meditate on Thee, O red-hued Lord with Thy four faces!' and his face would be bathed in tears! .

"When my father used to pass along the road with his wooden sandals on, all the shopkeepers would stand up and say, 'There he comes!'

"When he bathed in the waters of the Haldarpukur, none dared to bathe there at that

time. They would wait to know if he had finished his bath.

"He would repeat, 'Raghuvir !' 'Raghuvir!' and his chest would become red.

"This occurred to me also at Brindavan when I saw the cattle returning from their pasture. I was filled with ecstasy and my body became red-coloured.

"Very strong indeed was the faith of men in those days. It is even said that the Divine Mother danced in the form of Kali while the Sadhaka clapped his hands in tune."

A 'Hatha Yogi' has been staying in the hut at Panchavati. He has already secured an ardent devotee in Rama Prasanna, son of Krishna Kishore of Ariadah. The Yogi requires twenty-five rupees monthly for opium and milk. Rama Prasanna therefore has asked the Master to recommend the Yogi to his visitors that they may subscribe something.

The Master says to a few devotees, "Go to the Hatha Yogi at Panchavati and see what sort of man he is."

II.

Enters 'Thakur Dada' with a few friends and makes his obeisance to the Master. He is an inhabitant of Baranagore, about twenty-five years old. His father was a Sanskrit scholar, and he himself is practising 'Kathakata,' the art of telling Scriptural stories. He once left the world under the impulse of

religion, but the responsibilities of the family have again fallen on his shoulders.

Sri Ramakrishna : Have you come on foot? Where do you come from?

Dada : Yes, Sir, I came from Baranagore.

Sri Ramakrishna : Have you come here on any business?

Dada : I have come to pay my respects to your holiness. I pray to Him, yet sometimes I feel very restless,—why is it so? For some days I feel great joy, but again there comes a period of great restlessness.

Sri Ramakrishna : I see, it is not properly fitting. It will be a nice machine if the mechanic properly fixes the teeth of the wheels. As it is, there is obstruction somewhere.

Dada : Sir, it is exactly as you say.

Sri Ramakrishna : Have you been initiated?

Dada : Yes, Sir, I have.

Sri Ramakrishna : Do you believe in the Mantram?.....

A friend of 'Thakur Dada' says that he (Dada) can sing well. The Master says, "Why not sing a little?"

Dada sings :

"I shall become a Yogi. I'll dwell in Love's mountain cave, and beside the stream of Thy Bliss I shall lose myself in Thy communion.

"I shall gather the fruits of Truth and appease my hunger for Knowledge with them. And I shall gather the flowers of Dispassion, and lay them at Thy blessed feet.

THE MASTER, THE SPIRITUAL MECHANIC 221

"No more in the loathsome 'well' shall I seek for drink to quench life's thirsting void. In the waters of Thy Peace I shall fill the cup of my heart.

"Sometimes again, having drunk deep of Thy nectar, I'll climb the summit of Ecstasy, and laugh and cry and dance and sing. I shall become a Yogi. I'll dwell in Love's mountain cave."

Sri Ramakrishna: Ah, a nice song! 'Stream of Thy Bliss,' 'fruits of Truth,' 'laugh and cry and dance and sing.'

"Your song appears so sweet to me,—for what more should you care?

"Joy and woe, pleasure and pain, these have to be enjoyed and suffered, so long as you live in the world; there must be a little peacelessness. You cannot avoid a little staining if you dwell in a sooty room."

Dada: Now instruct me, Sir, what I am to do.

Sri Ramakrishna: Every morning and evening take the name of the Lord, clapping your hands to keep time, and crying 'Haribol,' 'Haribol.'

"And come here once again,—first let my hand be cured a bit."

Mahimacharan comes in and salutes the Master. The Master tells him, "Ah, what a nice song he has sung to me! (To Dada) Just sing it again, will you?"

And Dada complies, singing,

"I shall become a Yogi, I'll dwell in Love's mountain cave, etc."

When the singing is over, the Master asks Mahimacharan to recite certain stanzas on

God-Devotion. He quotes them from 'Narada Pancharatra,' reciting :

"If Hari be worshipped, what need is there for Tapasya? What purpose will Tapasya serve, if Hari be not worshipped? If Hari be realised within and without, then what need is there for Tapasya? Of what avail will one's Tapasya be, if Hari be not realised within and without?"

Sri Ramakrishna: Recite that also,—'Get from Him the mature Hari Bhakti.'

Mahimacharan continues, "Cease, O Brahmin, cease, what will you gain by Tapasya? My child, go ere long to Sankara*, the Ocean of Knowledge, and get from Him the mature Hari Bhakti, as taught by Sri Vaishnava, that will sever like an axe the strong bonds of Samsara."

Sri Ramakrishna: Sankara will grant Hari Bhakti.

Mahima: 'Siva is ever free from bondage.'

Sri Ramakrishna: Shyness, hatred, fear, hesitation,—these are bondages; what do you say?

Mahima: Yes, Sir. And to try to conceal, to blush before praise, these too.

Sri Ramakrishna: There are two signs of knowledge. The first is 'an unshakable mind.' Even the keenest sorrows and sufferings, the greatest dangers and calamities, cannot affect

Signs of
Knowledge.

* Siva.

him, like unto the anvil in the smithy, receiving constant hammer blows. The second is 'manliness'—strong determination. 'Lust and anger are harmful? This moment I shake them off.' If a tortoise once draws its legs within, it will never thrust them out, even though you cut it into four pieces.

"(To Thakur Dada). There are two sorts of Vairagya, intense and feeble. The feeble dispassion is a slow process, dragging on half-heartedly. But the intense dispassion is like the edge of a sharp razor, easily cutting the bonds of Maya.

"There was a certain farmer who laboured in vain for days to let water into his field from a tank, because he had no determination. But there was another, who, after working a few days, resolved that he must bring water that very day; and he put aside all thought of bath and meal, and worked all the day long till, by evening, the water flowed in murmuringly, and his joy knew no bounds. Then he went home and called his wife, saying, 'Bring oil, now I'll have my bath,' and he bathed and ate and lay down to sleep with a peaceful mind.

"A certain wife said to her husband, 'So and so has conceived a great dispassion for the world. But you cannot do anything. He has sixteen wives and he is renouncing them one

Three sorts of
Vairagya.

by one.' The husband with towel on his shoulders, was going to bathe. He said, 'You silly! He will never give up; do you think there can be renunciation by instalments? I can renounce! Look here, I go!' And he did not wait to settle his home affair; he left his house just as he was, towel and all, and went away. And this indeed is intense dispassion!

"There is another sort of dispassion called 'the monkey dispassion.' Harrowed by vexations and distresses at home, one sometimes puts on the Gerua cloth and goes away to Benares; and for a long time there is no news about him. Then comes a letter from him, saying, 'Don't you worry about me; I have secured employment here.'

"The vexations of the world are inevitable. The wife perhaps is disobedient; the monthly salary may be barely twenty rupees; he perchance cannot afford to celebrate his child's 'Annaprasana' ceremony or to properly educate his children; the house is dilapidated,—the roof is leaky, and he has no money to pay for its repair!

"That is why when any boys come here, I ask them whom they have got at home. (To Mahima) What is the need of your giving up the world? How the Sadhus suffer! A certain wife told her husband, 'You want to renounce the world? Why? You will have to beg your food then from eight homes; here you get it at one home,—that is much better.'

Advantages of
the householder
life

“Sadhus have sometimes to make a detour of six miles in search of ‘Sada-brata*’. I have noted that Sadhus returning from their pilgrimage to Jagannatha have to leave the direct pathway to seek for alms.

“This is very nice,—to fight from within the fort. There are many difficulties when fighting in an open field,—many dangers; there is risk of being shot down.

“But you should repair into the solitude for a time and return to the world only after attaining Knowledge. Janaka lived in the world after having achieved Illumination. And what does it matter where you live, when you have gained Knowledge?”

Mahima: Sir, why is man attached to sense-objects?

Sri Ramakrishna: It is because man lives amongst them without having realising the Lord beforehand. Man never suffers delusion after he has realised Him.

“If the moth can once catch the glimpse of light, it will never more remain content with darkness.

“To realise Him, one must practise absolute continence.

“Shukadeva was ‘Urdharetah†’; he never had any emission of semen.

* A gift of food-articles to mendicants and wayfarers, as an act of merit.

† ‘Urdharetah’ is one whose semen has never come downwards; i. e., a man of complete and unbroken continence.

“There is another class called ‘Dhairyaretah*’. They had the discharge of semen formerly, but now they are practising absolute continence. If a man remains ‘Dhairyaretah’ continually for twelve years, he acquires a superhuman power. A new nerve is developed in him; it is called the ‘nerve of intelligence’, and he can remember everything and know everything.

“Loss of semen impairs strength. But the semen that is lost in nocturnal emission is not harmful; that is due to diet. What remains is sufficient. But never for all that should one know any woman. The semen that remains after all this discharge is preserved in a refined condition. The Lahas kept molasses in jars with holes at their bottoms. After one year it was found that the molasses had crystallized into sugar-candy and the watery portion had leaked out through the holes.

“The Sannyasin must renounce woman completely. But if you are already engrossed, you need not mind. The Sannyasin must not see even the picture of a woman. But the ordinary man cannot be so strict. *Sa, re, ga, ma, pa, dha, nee*,—it is not possible to keep your voice in the pitch of *nee* for a long time.

“Seminal discharge is extremely injurious to Sannyasins. They, therefore, must always

* ‘Dhairyaretah’ is explained in the next sentence.

be on their guard that they may not see the form of woman. They must avoid the proximity of even a devout woman.

The rigors of a
Sannyasin's life.

"The Sannyasin may have full control over his senses, but, as an example to mankind, he must desist from conversing with woman: no, even if she is a Bhakta, he must not talk long with her.

"The Sannyasin observes an absolute fast on the *Ekadashi* *. There are two other kinds of *Ekadashi*; you may observe it by taking either fruits and vegetables, or *luchi* † and curry. [Laughter.] In the latter case, you may also have a few breads soaked in milk. [Laughter.]

"(Smilingly) You cannot observe the *Ekadashi* of the absolute fasting. I once found Krishnakishore observing his *Ekadashi* with *luchi* and curry. I said to Hridu, 'Hridu, I also want to observe Krishnakishore's *Ekadashi*.' [Laughter.] And so I did one day,—I ate my fill. I could not take anything next day." [All laugh.]

Those who went to the Hatha Yogi in the Panchavati have come back. The Master asks them, "Halloo, how did you find him? Did he not measure you with a tape?"

The Master finds that few are willing to pay anything to the Hatha Yogi. He says,

* The fast observed on the eleventh day of every fortnight.

† *Luchi* is a sort of bread made of flour and fried in clarified butter.

"The moment you have to pay anything to a Sadhu you begin to dislike him. Rajendra Mitra, drawing a salary of eight hundred rupees came here on his return from the Kumbha Mela† at Allahabad. I asked him, 'Tell me, how did you find the Sadhus at the Mela?' He replied, 'I did not find any very great Sadhu there. And the one I found accepted money.'

"So I think, if nobody would pay anything to the Sadhu, how would he maintain himself? None has to pay anything here, so they all come. And I say to myself, 'Ah, they love money so much,—let them have it!'"

The Master is enjoying a short rest. One of the devotees is sitting at the lower end of the small cot, shampooing the Master's sacred feet. The Master tells him in a low voice, "He that is formless, even He has form. His form-aspect also must be admitted. By constant meditation on the form of Kali, the Sadhaka does indeed realise Him in the Kali form. He next finds that form merging in the Undivided Absolute. The Akhanda Sachchidananda and Kali,—they are indeed the same Entity."

III.

The Master is sitting in the western circular porch, talking with Mahimacharan and other devotees about the Hatha Yogi. Rama

† It is a gathering of Hindu Sadhus, in which millions of men and women assemble from all India, held every twelve years in certain fixed places.

Prasanna is the son of a devotee: the Master therefore loves him.

Sri Ramakrishna: Rama Prasanna is always roaming about aimlessly. The other day he came here, but he did not utter a single word; he remained closing his nostrils with his fingers, performing Pranayama. I offered him some refreshments: he refused them. On another occasion, I called him to me,—he sat down folding one leg on the other, pointing if towards 'Captain*'. I shed tears at his mother's suffering.

"He asked me to tell you about the Hatha Yoga,—he needs six and a half annas daily. But he himself won't request it of you."

Mahima: And who'll heed him even if he requests? [The Master and others laugh.]

The Master comes back into his room and sits down on the cot. S. J. Mani Sen of the Peneti Temple and some of his friends have come to visit the Master. One of the friends is a doctor. Mani sen inquires about the Master's hand.

The Master is under the treatment of Dr. Pratap Ch. Mazumdar. But the doctor friend of S. J. Sen does not approve of his prescription. The Master says, "He is no fool; why do you talk like that?"

It is not yet evening. Mani is sitting on a small mat near the Master's cot. The Master

* 'Captain' is the epithet given by Sri Ramakrishna to J. Biswanath Upadhyay, Agent of the Nepal Government in Calcutta.

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remarks to him, on hearing Mahimacharan hotly discussing the Shastras with the doctor friend of Mani Sen. "There, he is delivering himself," says the Master, "It is all Rajas. Rajas incites a man to show his learning and to lecture. But Sattwa makes him introspective and unobtrusive. But he is a very nice man, —so enthusiastic in the words of God!"

When Mani Sen and his friends have departed, the Master says of the doctor, "I know him. I said of him to Jadu Mallik, 'This your doctor is worthless, more dull-witted than doctor so-and-so.'"

Adhar comes in and salutes the Master and sits beside M. S. Adhar Sen is a Deputy Magistrate; he lives at Benetola in the Sova Bazar Section of Calcutta and is about thirty years old. For a long time he had been wont to come to Dakshineswar every evening after his day's work. But he has been absent for the last few evenings.

Sri Ramakrishna: Hallo, why did you not come all these days?

Adhar: Sir, I was quite overwhelmed with work. I had to attend a meeting of the School Committee and various other meetings.

Sri Ramakrishna: So you completely lost yourself in schools and meetings!

Adhar: Yes, Sir; everything was forgotten. What is the present condition of your hand?

Sri Ramakrishna: Just see, it is not yet cured. I have been taking Pratap's medicine.

After a short pause, the Master suddenly speaks to Adhar: "Look here, all these things are transitory; these meetings and schools—these are all evanescent. God alone is real and everything else is unreal. And to His worship alone, you should devote your whole heart."

Think of God
alone.

Adhar remains silent.

Sri Ramakrishna: All these indeed is transient! This body has only a momentary existence, and one must make haste to worship and realise Him.

"You need not renounce everything completely. Live in the world like the tortoise. The tortoise itself lives in the water, but keeps its eggs on land and its whole mind dwells on them as they lie there.

" 'Captain' has developed a nice character. When he sits to worship, he looks just like a Rishi. He performs the Aratrikam by burning camphor, and recites beautiful invocations. And when he finishes his worship, his eyes look as though they had been bitten by ants. And he always reads the Gita and the Bhagavatam.

"I once spoke a few English words before him. He became angry and said, 'The English-educated people are unholy.'"

A short while after, Adhar entreats the Master saying, "It is a long time since you

have been to our house. The drawing-room smells stuffy and everything is, as it were, steeped in darkness."

These words of the devotee fill the Master with an exceeding love, and suddenly standing up, he touches Adhar and M. on the head and heart and blesses them. And with great affection, he says, "I see you as Narayana Himself! You are verily my own!"

Mahimacharan returns to the Master's room and squats on the floor.

Sri Ramakrishna: (to Mahima) It is all true what you then said about the 'Dhairya-reta'. Unless one practises continence, one cannot assimilate these teachings. A man once asked Chaitanyadeva, 'You are instructing them so carefully, why do they not make any progress?' He replied, 'They waste everything by intercourse with women; they cannot retain my teachings.' If you keep water in a leaky jar all water will go out by and by.

Mahimacharan and other devotees remain silent for sometime. Then he says to the Master, "Sir, pray to God for our sake that He may grant us the needed strength!"

Sri Ramakrishna: Be still on your guard! True, it is the flood of the rains,—very hard to be stemmed. But much water has already flowed out; if you build the dam now, it will stand.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DAKSHINESWAR TEMPLE,—APRIL, 1884

I.

It is eight in the morning of the 5th of April, 1884. Sri Ramakrishna with a smile on his face, is seated on his small cot conversing with Prankrishna, Mukherjee and other devotees.

Sj. Prankrishna comes of an aristocratic family, and is highly devoted to the Master. Every morning he repairs to the Baghbazar Ghaut for ablution in the holy waters of the Ganges, and whenever he manages to get a boat, he comes directly over to Dakshineswar to visit Sri Ramakrishna. To-day he hired a boat and invited M. to go in it. But before the boat had proceeded far, M. became afraid of the waves and, in spite of assurances of safety, insisted on being put ashore.

When M. arrives at the Temple, he finds Prankrishna sitting before the Master, engaged in a conversation. M. salutes the Master and sits down on the floor.

Sri Ramakrishna : But His greatest manifestation is in man. You may argue, how can one, who has all the defects of an ordinary man, hunger, thirst, and even disease and grief, be an incarnation of God? The reply is, that 'even the Brahman cries, when ensnared in the trap of the five elements'.

The mystery of
Divine Incarna-
tion.

"Take the case of Sri Ramachandra,—even He cried when He lost Sita. The Lord incarnated Himself as a Boar in order to destroy Hiranyaksha. But when that was done, He refused to go back to His own sphere. He continued to live as a boar and sow and gave birth to several young, and was quite happy. The gods said, 'What is this! The Lord, it seems, does not intend to return!' So they all went to Siva and laid the matter before Him. Siva went to the Boar and urged Him to come back; but He would only suckle His children. Then Siva destroyed His body with His trident, and the Lord laughed out and went away to His celestial sphere."

Prankrishna: What is *Anahata Shabda*?

Sri Ramakrishna: This *Anahata Shabda* is always going on of itself,—
 Anahata Shab- it is the sound of *Pranava*,—
 da—Aum. 'Aum.' It originates in the Para-Brahman and is audible to the Yogis. The worldly people cannot hear it. The Yogi knows that this sound originates on the one side from the navel and, on the other side, from the Para-Brahman, lying on the "*Kshiroda*"—the Ocean of Milk.

Prankrishna: Sir, what is the other world like?

Sri Ramakrishna: Keshab Sen also asked me this question. So long as man is ignorant, that is to say, has not realised God, he will have

to be born again and again. But having attained Knowledge, he is redeemed from further incarnation ;—he has not to come either to this earth or to other worlds.

“The potter puts his wares in the sun to dry. Have you not noted that there are both baked and unbaked pots amongst them ? When a cow happens to tread on them, some of the pots are broken to pieces. If there are baked ones amongst them, the potter rejects them as useless. But the unbaked ones he gathers up, makes them into a lump and out of it forms new pots on his wheel.

“Therefore, so long as a man has not realised God, he will have to go to the Potter’s hands ; that is, he will have to be born in the world repeatedly.

“What is the use of sowing a boiled paddy grain ? It will never bring forth the shoot. When a man is ‘boiled’ with the fire of Knowledge, he can be of no further use in creation : he becomes free.

“According to the Puranas, the Bhakta is one entity and the Bhagavan is another entity,—‘ I ’ am one and ‘ You ’ are another. The body is, as it were, an earthen saucer ; mind, intelligence and egoism are water ; and the Brahman, the sun. In this ‘ saucer ’ of the body is contained the water of mind, intelligence and

What is the other world ?

The Bhakta,—his God-vision.

egoism ; and the Brahman, who is like unto the sun, is being reflected in that water. Hence does the Bhakta see the vision of God.

“According to the Vedanta, Brahman is the only substance; everything else is Maya, dreamlike. The stick of ego is lying across the ocean of Sachchidananda ;—(to M.) just note what I say—if you take it off, there remains only the one undivided Ocean of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. But if the stick remains, it appears as two entities,—this, one sheet of water, and that, another. Having attained the Knowledge of Brahman, man is plunged in Samadhi, and his ego is wiped out.

“But then, Sankaracharya retained the ego of Vidya for the teaching of mankind.

“(To Prankrishna) But there are signs of a Jnani. Some there are who think they have become Jnanis. What are the signs? The Jnani can never harm any one. His nature becomes like a child's. If you touch an iron sword with the philosopher's stone, it becomes gold, and gold can never cut. Of course, from the outside, the Jnani may seem to have anger or egoism, but, really, he has none.

“From a distance, a burnt rope, looks like a real one lying on the ground. But if, on coming near, you blow at it, it will be all scattered away. His anger and egoism are mere semblances of them, not real anger or egoism.

The Jnani and his signs.

"A child has no 'tightness' of character. Perhaps he makes a doll's house; if any one only touches it, he will jump and cry. The next moment he himself will demolish it all. Perhaps he is very firm about his cloth,—he tells you that his father gave it to him and he will never part with it; but the next moment you can dupe him with a toy and he will go away leaving his cloth behind.

"These are the signs of a Jnani. He may have a magnificent house with couch, chair, pictures, and equipage; but he may any day renounce everything and go away to Benares.

"According to the Vedanta, the waking state also is not real. A wood-cutter once lay dreaming, when a man woke him up to his great annoyance. He said, 'Why did you disturb my sleep? I had become a king and a father of seven sons. My sons were all becoming well-accomplished in letters and warfare, and I was sitting on my throne, attending to my affairs of state! Why did you shatter my happy world?' The man replied, 'It was but a dream,—what is the harm?' The wood-cutter said, 'Bah, you don't understand! My being a dream-king is as true as my being a wood-cutter: if to be a wood-cutter is real, then to be a king in dream is also real.'"

Prankrishna always talks of Jnana. Was it therefore that the Master described the state of the Jnani? Now he speaks of Vijnana, referring perchance to his own state.

"Jnana is the realisation of the Atman by the elimination of all phenomena. By eliminating the phenomena through *Vichara*, mental analysis, one attains Samadhi and realises the Atman.

"And *Vijnana* means knowing with greater fulness. Some have only heard of milk, some have but seen it, while others have tasted it. He who has only heard of it is the ignorant man; he who has seen it is the Jnani. But only he who has tasted it has attained *Vijnana*; that is, he has known it in its entirety. To see God and have intimate relation with Him, as with a near kinsman, is what is called *Vijnana*.

"First you have to follow the process of *Neti, Neti*,—'Not this,' 'Not this': He is not the five elements, He is not the senses, nor the mind, nor the intelligence, nor the ego,—He is beyond all Principles. To get up to the roof, you have to leave below all the steps of the staircase, one by one. Of course, the steps are not the roof. But when you reach the roof, you find that the roof is made of the same brick, lime, mortar and sand as the staircase. That which is Para-Brahman, the same has become the Jiva-Jagat,—the twenty-four Principles. That which is the Atman has become the five elements. You may ask why the earth is so hard if it has come out of the

Atman. Through His will everything is possible. Are not flesh and bone made from blood and semen? How hard becomes the foam of the ocean!

"After attaining Vijnana, a man can live in the world as well. For then he clearly perceives that He Himself has become the Jiva-Jagat, that He is not outside the world. When Ramachandra attained Knowledge and refused to remain in the world, Dasaratha sent Vasistha to persuade him. Vasistha said, 'Rama, if the world is outside God, you may give it up.' Ramachandra remained silent, for he well knew that nothing exists without God. He could not renounce the world.

"(To Prankrishna) The fact is, one must develop the spiritual eye. When the mind becomes pure, then is that eye born. Take, for instance, the *Kumari Puja*, worship of maidens. A girl with all the human defects,—her I found to be the Divine Mother Herself! The wife is on one side and the boy on the other; a man loves them both, but he loves them differently. So it comes to this, that the mind is everything. When the mind becomes pure, a new consciousness comes to it; and a man, having such a mind, sees God even in the world. Therefore, one must practise Sadhana.

"Purity of mind is impossible without Sadhana. It must be known that attachment

for a woman is quite easy to form. A woman naturally loves a man, and a man naturally loves a woman; so they fall easily."...

A Hatha Yogi has been staying in the Panchavati for the last few days. He lives only on milk and opium, and does not take rice. But he has no money to buy them. When the Master went to the Panchavati, he made the acquaintance of the Yogi. The Hatha Yogi had requested Rakhal to speak about him to the Master, and the Master also had promised that he would tell the visitors from Calcutta about him.

Now the Hatha Yogi comes in and says, "Did you send me any word through Rakhal?"

Sri Ramakrishna: Yes, I said that I would see if any Babu can give you anything. But—(to Prankrishna and others) I fear you don't like those Yogis?

Prankrishna remains silent. The Hatha Yogi departs.

II.

Sri Ramakrishna: And if a man lives in the world, he must be very particular about telling the truth.

Master's
truthfulness.

Through truth, he can realise God. I may say that my firmness about truthfulness has now abated a little, but formerly I was very strict. If I said I would bathe, then I would go to the Ganges, recite the Mantrams and pour some water on the head; but still

the doubt came whether my bath had been complete. I went to Ram's house in Calcutta; there I happened to say that I would not take *luchi*. When the dinner was announced, I felt very hungry. But I had already said that I would not eat *luchi*, so I had to fill my stomach with sweets. [All laugh.]

“Now that scrupulousness has relaxed a little. I really did not feel any urge, yet I happened to say that I would go to answer the call of nature. What was to be done? I referred the matter to Ram. He said, ‘You need not go.’ Then I reasoned within myself: ‘Everything is Narayana Himself; Ram also is Narayana; why then should I not accept his advice? True, the elephant is Narayana, but the driver also is Narayana. And since the driver tells me not to approach the elephant, then why not obey him?’ By such reasonings have I managed to relax my strictness.

“I find now that another change has come over me. Many years ago, Vaishnav Charan told me that one attains Perfect Knowledge only when one sees God in man. Now I see that it is He who is moving about in different forms, now as an honest man, now as a cheat and again as a villain. So I say,—‘Narayana in the guise of an honest man,’ ‘Narayana in the form of a swindler,’ ‘Narayana in the form of a villain,’ ‘Narayana in the form of a lewd person.’

"Now the problem is how I can entertain all. I wish to feed everyone. Therefore I keep one at a time with me and entertain him."

Prankrishna: (on seeing M., smilingly) Very fine man! (To Sri Ramakrishna) He compelled us to land him from the boat.

Sri Ramakrishna: (smilingly) What was the matter?

Prankrishna: He came into our boat. But, finding the river slightly rough, he insisted on being put ashore. (To M.) How did you come?

M.: I came on foot.

The Master is laughing.

Prankrishna: Sir, I am now thinking of resigning my service. If I have to serve, I cannot do any other thing. (Pointing to his companion) I am training him in my work; he will relieve me. It has become intolerable!

Sri Ramakrishna: Yes, it is a great trouble. Now it is highly desirable for you to think of the Lord in solitude. You say you will resign your employment. But Captain also spoke like that. The worldly people say many things, but they cannot carry them out.

"There are many scholars who utter many words of wisdom. They only *speak*, they do not *act*; just as a vulture, which soars high up in the air, has its eyes all the time fixed on the charnel pits; that is to say, attached to Kamini-Kanchana—the world.

"If I hear that a scholar has Viveka and Vairagya, then I fear him; otherwise I look upon him as a mere dog or goat."

Prankrishna salutes the Master and takes his leave.

M. walks about for a while in the Panchavati, and then performs his ablution in the river ghaut where Sri Ramakrishna usually bathes. He then visits the temples of Radhakanta and Bhavatarini and salutes the deities. And he thus thinks within himself, "I heard and knew that God is formless. Why then am I prostrating myself before these images? Why? Because Sri Ramakrishna himself believes in gods, and goddesses with form. I myself do not know or understand anything about the Lord. If the Master can have faith in them, then I—a mere pigmy—must believe in them too!"

M. stands before the image of the Divine Mother, Bhavatarini. He finds that She holds in her two left hands a man's severed head and a sword, and Her two right hands indicate the grant of boons and the assurance of safety. In one aspect, She is fearful, but in the other, She is the affectionate Mother. She is a combination of two opposite moods. She is a kind and loving mother to Her devotees, to those that are meek and helpless. But it is also true that 'the Mother is the terrible consort of Death!' Mother alone knows why She manifests such contrary moods!

As M. continues to look, he remembers this interpretation of the Master's and he thinks:

"I am told Keshab Sen accepted Kali before Sri Ramakrishna. Is this, as Keshab said, 'the Spiritual Being within the earthen receptacle'?"

M. returns to the Master. As he has bathed, the Master gives him Prasadam,—some fruits and vegetables. He eats them, sitting in the western porch. When he returns to the Master, he forgets to bring back the water-pot he has used. The Master asks him, "Have you brought the pot?"

M.: Here, I am getting it.

Sri Ramakrishna: Bah!

M. is somewhat shame-faced. He brings the pot back and puts it in its place.

M.'s home is in Calcutta. But, in order to avoid troubles at home, he is now staying in a hired house at Shyampukur, near his place of business. His father and brothers are living in the ancestral home. The Master wishes him to go back to his home, for living in a joint family greatly facilitates spiritual progress. Though the Master has several times before, expressed his wish, M. unfortunately has not yet complied with it. To-day, again, the Master refers to this subject.

Sri Ramakrishna: Tell me, now, are you at last returning home?

M.: I have not the heart to enter that house.

Sri Ramakrishna: Why? Your father is renewing the whole house.

M.: I have suffered much at home. I cannot make up my mind to return there.

Sri Ramakrishna: Whom do you fear?

M.: I fear all.

Sri Ramakrishna: (gravely) That is like your fear of a boat in rough water!

By and by, the *bhogam* is offered to the deities and *aratrikam* is done with the music of bells and *kunsars*, and a great joy fills the Temple. Hearing the music of *aratrikam*, Sadhus, Fakirs, beggars, and all others hurry to the Guest House to receive Prasadam, some with leaves, others with plates in hand. All are given the sacramental food, and M. also partakes of it.

III.

The Master is resting after dinner. In the meantime, Ram, Girindra and a few other devotees arrive from Calcutta. They salute the Master and take their seat.

The talk turns on the New Dispensation Church of S. J. Keshab Ch. Sen.

Ram: Sir, it is my opinion that this New Dispensation has done no good. If Keshab Babu himself was sincere, why then are his followers left in such a plight? I think there is nothing real in it. It is like the rattling of potsherds in a locked room,—people take it to be a jingling of money,—they do not know the truth from the outside.

Sri Ramakrishna: There must be some reality in it, or why should people respect

Keshab so highly? Why do people not know Sivanath? Such things cannot be without the will of God.

"But, of course, without renouncing the world one cannot be a teacher of men,—men do not have faith in him. They say, 'He is a worldly man,—he himself secretly enjoys Kamini-Kanchana, but preaches to us that God alone is real and this world is dreamlike, ephemeral.' Unless a man renounces everything, his words will not be accepted by all. Only a few of the worldly ones may follow him.

"Keshab had his worldly affairs and necessarily his mind also was attached to the world,—he must look after his properties! Though he lectured so much, he left his property in perfect order! Such a son-in-law! I went into his inner apartments,—there were big bedsteads! All these possessions come in course of time, if one has a household. Indeed, the world is the place of enjoyment!"

Ram: These bedsteads fell to his share when the ancestral home was divided. Whatever you may say, sir, Bijoy Babu has confessed that Keshab Sen once told him that he was himself a partial incarnation of Christ and Gouranga and advised Bijoy Babu to declare himself as Advaita! Do you know what else they say? They say you are also a follower of the New Dispensation! [The Master and the devotees laugh out.]

Sri Ramakrishna: (smiling) Who knows?—I, however, do not know the meaning of New Dispensation. [Laughter.]

Ram: Keshab's disciples declare that he was the first to harmonise Jnana and Bhakti.

Sri Ramakrishna: (in surprise) What do you say? What of Adhyatma (Ramayana) then? Narada prayed to Ramachandra: 'O Rama, the Vedas speak of the Para-Brahman,—Thou art He! Thou art moving before us as a man; though Thou appearest human, Thou art not really so; Thou art the Supreme Brahman!' Ramachandra said, 'Narada, I am highly pleased with thee; ask thou thy boon.' 'O Rama,' replied Narada, 'What boon shall I ask of Thee? Grant that I may have pure devotion to Thy lotus feet, and may I never be deluded by Thy world-deluding Maya!' Adhyatma is full of the words of Jnana and Bhakti.

Ram speaks of Keshab's disciple Amrita.

Ram: Amrita Babu is almost near his end.

Sri Ramakrishna: Yes, the other day he looked very thin.

Ram: Sir, let me tell you about their lectures. When the *khol* is playing play, they cry out, 'Victory unto Keshab!' Now, you say that it is only in the stagnant water of a small pool that *Dal* (sedge) grows. So, one day, Amrita Babu said, in course of a sermon, 'True, the Sadhu has said that *Dal* (sedge) grows in stagnant pools; but I tell you,

brothers, we want a *Dal* (sect); of a truth, I tell you we do want a *Dal*!

Sri Ramakrishna: Fie! fie!—what sort of a lecture is this?

“They took me to Keshab Sen’s to see the performance of *Nimai Sannyasa*. That day I found somebody speaking of Keshab and Pratap as Gour and Nitai. Prasanna asked me, ‘What are you then?’ I noted that Keshab looked at me to hear my reply. I said, ‘I am the servant of your servants.’ Keshab laughingly remarked, ‘He does not allow himself to be caught.’”

Ram: Keshab would sometimes say that you are John the Baptist.

A Devotee: But he also said that you are the Chaitanya of Nineteenth Century.

Sri Ramakrishna: What is that?

A Devotee: He said Chaitanyadeva has again incarnated himself in the present century of the English era, and that you are he.

Sri Ramakrishna: (absent-mindedly) However that may be, tell me now how I can cure my hand. This is my only problem now.

They speak of Trailokya’s songs. He sings the praise of the Lord in Keshab’s Church.

Sri Ramakrishna: Ah, how nicely he sings!

Ram: What! Are his songs all genuine?

Sri Ramakrishna: Yes, they are quite genuine, or why should they draw my mind so powerfully?

Ram: He has composed all his songs by observing your moods. Keshab Sen used to describe them in his sermons, and Trailokya Babu composed songs accordingly. Take this song for instance: 'Bliss is overflowing in the fair of Love; the Lord is playing with His devotees in infinite joy!' This song was composed on seeing your blissful communion with the devotees here.

Sri Ramakrishna: (smiling) Stop, I say!Why do you drag *me* into it? [Laughter.]

Girindra: The Brahmos say that Paramahansa-deva has no faculty for organisation.

Sri Ramakrishna: What does that mean?

M.: You cannot lead a sect, you lack intellect,—so they say. [Laughter.]

Sri Ramakrishna: (to Ram) Now tell me why my hand broke. Take this as your subject and deliver a lecture. [All laugh.]

"The Brahmos insist on the formlessness of God,—that is all right. Only let them be sincere. If a man is sincere, then He who resides in every heart will certainly reveal His real nature to him.

"But it is not good to say that all that we ourselves have understood is alone true and what others say is all false. Because we think Him formless, therefore He must be formless; He cannot have form! And because we think that He has form, therefore He must have form; He cannot be formless! Can man really ever find any end to Him?

“Thus do the Vaishnavas and the Shaktas quarrel. The Vaishnava says, ‘My Keshava* is the only Saviour.’ The Shakta says, ‘My Divine Mother is the only Saviour.’

“I took Vaishnava Charan with me to Sejo Babu. Now Vaishnava Charan is a Vaishnava, very learned but bigoted, while Sejo Babu is a devotee of the Mother. They were talking in a very friendly way, when in course of the conversation, Vaishnava Charan happened to remark that Keshava alone could give salvation. At once, Sejo Babu’s face became red and he cried out, ‘You fellow!’ [Laughter.] Was he not a Shakta? So naturally he must say so!

“I find all men quarrelling in the name of religion. Hindus, Mussalmans, Brahmos, Shaktas, Vaishnavas, Shaivas,—all are quarrelling with one another. They never think that He who is called Krishna is also called Siva, that He Himself is named Adyashakti—the Primal Energy, Jesus or Allah!—‘One Rama having a thousand names.’

“The Substance is one, only It has different names. And every one is seeking the same Substance: there is only the variance due to clime, temperament and name. The same tank has many ghauts. From one ghaut, the Hindus are taking water in jars,—they say it is *jal*;

* One of the names of Sri Krishna.

the Mussalmans take water in leathern bags from another ghaut—they call it *pani*; the Christians take water from a third ghaut—they name it *water*. [Laughter.]

“Now if some one were to argue that this substance is not *jal* but *pani*, or not *pani* but *water* or that it is not *water* but *jal*, it would be very ridiculous indeed. Therefore, sectarianism, misunderstanding, disputation, fighting, or bloodshed in the name of religion, is not desirable. Every one is following His path, and if he is sincere and yearns to know Him, then certainly he will realise Him. (To Mani) Just note what I say :

“The Vedas, the Puranas, the Tantras, all Scriptures, are trying to know Him only, none else. Their quest is the same one Sachchidananda! He, whom the Vedas speak of as the *Sachchidananda Brahman*, even He, according to the Tantras, is the *Sachchidananda Siva*; and Him, again, the Puranas have declared as the *Sachchidananda Krishna*.”

The Master is told that Ram sometimes cooks his own food. He asks Mani, “Do you also cook your own food?”

M.: No, Sir.

Sri Ramakrishna: You may try it,—with a little clarified butter. You will feel your body and mind purified.

IV.

A long conversation follows about Ram's household. His father is a devout Vaishnava,

and there is daily worship of Sridhara* in his home. When Ram was quite young, his father married a second time. His father and step-mother are staying in his house at present, but he finds no peace in the company of his step-mother. She is forty years old and, because of her, he is sometimes even angry with his father.

Ram: Father 'has gone to the dogs!

Sri Ramakrishna: (to the devotees) Do you hear? Father has gone to the dogs, but his son is all right!

Ram: Whenever she (the step-mother) comes home, there is no peace. Some trouble always starts, and our household is in a turmoil. Therefore I say, let her live with her father.

Girindra: (to Ram) Keep your wife also with her father then! [Laughter.]

Sri Ramakrishna: Are they earthen pots or jars that you will keep the pot in one place and its lid in another?—Siva in one place and Shakti in another?

Ram: Sir, we are quite happy now. But if she comes, our home will break up. Under the circumstances—

Sri Ramakrishna: Yes, if you can give her another establishment, that is different. You will pay for her monthly expenses. How highly the parents should be respected! Rakhal asked me whether he should partake of the leavings

Respect for
parents.

* One of the names of Sri Krishna.

of his father. 'How is that?' I asked him. What has become of you that you will not partake of his leavings?"

"But it is said that the good never allow the leavings of their dishes to be taken by others. Not even to dogs can these be given!"

Girindra: Sir, what if the parents commit any great crime, or if they are guilty of any great sin?

Sri Ramakrishna: Let it be so. Even a depraved mother should not be renounced. When the wife of the spiritual preceptor of a certain family became corrupt, they wanted to make her son their Guru. I said, 'How is that? Will you take the shoot while you reject the yam? What if she is corrupt? You know her to be your *Islam*. 'Though my Guru may visit tavern and still, My Guru is holy Rai Nityananda still.'

Implicit faith in the Guru.
 "Father and mother,—are they trifles? Unless they are pleased, no devotional practice will be of any avail. Though Chaitanyadeva was mad with God-love, he took the greatest pains to console his mother before he became a Sannyasin. He said to her, 'Mother, I will come now and then to see you.'

"(To M., reproachfully) And I tell you, being bred and brought up by your parents, yourself father of several children, how could you go away with your wife? I know of fellows who forsake their parents and go out with their wives as mendicants, Had it not

been that your father is well provided for. I would have cried fie on you!

“These are the debts of a man: the debt to the gods, the debt to the Rishi
 Man's debts also the debts to the parents and to the wife. No work can succeed unless the debt to the parents is paid off.

“There is a debt even to the wife. Hari is living here, having renounced his wife. If his wife had not been provided for, I would have called him a wicked fellow.

“After attaining Knowledge, the Jnanee will find even his wife to be Mother Herself. The Chandi speaks of ‘The Goddess who abides in every created being as the Mother,’—even She Herself has become the mother.

“All women are but Her own Self. Hence it is that I cannot rebuke Brinde.

“There are some who quote Scripture and talk learnedly, but their conduct is quite to the contrary. Rama Prasanna is always wandering about for milk and opium for the Hatha Yogi. He says that Manu has enjoined the service of Sadhus. And this, while his old mother is starving and has to do her own shopping! I feel so angry!

“But there is another consideration. If a man becomes mad with God-love then who is father, who is mother and who is wife? He loves God so deeply that he becomes mad. He has no duty, he is absolved from all debts. What

When man is
absolved from
debts.

this madness of love? When a man reaches that state, he forgets the whole world; he becomes unconscious of even his body, which he loves so dearly. Chaitanyadeva realised this. And he plunged into the sea, not knowing that it was the sea. He dashed himself again and again on the ground,—he had no hunger, thirst or sleep. He had lost all body-consciousness!"

The Master exclaims, "Ha, Chaitanya!" and says to the devotees, "Chaitanya means Undivided Consciousness. Vaishnava Charan used to say that Gouranga was like a bubble of that ocean of Undivided Consciousness."

Sri Ramakrishna: (to Burho Gopal) Do you now wish to go on a pilgrimage?

B. Gopal: Yes, sir; let me wander a little.

Ram: (to B. Gopal) He [the Master] says that *Kutichaka* comes after *Bahudaka**. A Sadhu that visits many holy places is called a *Bahudaka*. While he whose wanderings are over and who settles down in one fixed place is called a *Kutichaka*.

"And he tells this story. There was a bird sitting on the mast of a ship, unaware that the ship had passed the mouth of the Ganges and entered the black waters. When it came to its senses, it flew to the north to find land; but it found no limit and returned to the ship. After a short rest, it flew towards the south; in that direction also it found no end and came back sorely exhausted. After resting awhile, it again flew to the east and

* Vide p. 17.

then to the west. But when it found that there was no shore on any side, it remained calmly sitting on the mast."

Sri Ramakrishna : (to B. Gopal and others). So long as you feel that God is 'there, there'—outside yourself—it is ignorance. But when you feel that God is 'here, here'—within yourself—it is Knowledge.

"A man wanted to have a smoke, so he went to a neighbouring house to get fire. It was the dead of night and all were sleeping. After many knockings, some one came down to open the door. When he saw the man, he asked him what he wanted. He replied, 'What can I want except fire?—you know how bad is the habit of smoking!' The neighbour said, 'You are a very fine man indeed! You have come all the way here, and such dreadful knocking! And all this time there is a lighted lantern in your own hand!' [Laughter.]

"What man seeks is quite at hand, yet he wanders about in search of it!"

Ram : Sir, now I understand why the Guru wants certain disciples to visit the four supreme holy places*. For when the disciple has finished his round of pilgrimage, he finds that it is the same here as there, and he comes back to his Guru. All this, that he may have faith in the words of his Guru.

After the conversation is over, the Master says in praise of Ram :

* These holy places are : Badri Narayan in the Himalayas, Dwaraka in the Bombay Presidency, Rameswaram in the Madras Presidency, and Puri in Orissa.

“Ah! Ram possesses many fine qualities! How many Bhaktas are fed and looked after, by him! (To Ram) Adhar told me that you show him great favours.”

Adhar's house is situated in Sobhabazar. He is extremely devoted to the Master. The other day he arranged for a Chandī song in his house, to which he invited the Master and many devotees. But Adhar forgot, to send any invitation to Ram. Ram took it to heart and complained of this neglect to the other devotees. Adhar thereupon went to his house to express sorrow for the mistake.

Ram: It was not Adhar's fault. I have come to know it was due to Rakhal. Rakhal was charged to—

Sri Ramakrishna: Don't find fault with Rakhal—even now (his mother's) milk will come out if you press his throat!

Ram: Sir, what do you say? There was Chandī song—

Sri Ramakrishna: Adhar simply did not remember to invite you. The other day he went with me to the house of Jadu Mallik. As we were starting back, I reminded him, ‘You have not offered anything to Simhavahini*.’ He said, ‘I did not know that something has to be offered!’

“Even if he did not invite you what harm is there in the Name of the Lord! One may join a singing of the Lord's name even without being asked,—no invitation is needed.

* One of the names of the Divine Mother.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DAKSHINESWAR TEMPLE AND THE STAR THEATRE, CALCUTTA—SEPTEMBER, 1884

I.

Sunday, the 21st of September, 1884. A large number of devotees have assembled* in the room of the Master. Ram, Mahendra Mukherji, Chunilal and M. are sitting there.

Chunilal has very recently returned from Brindavan, where he had gone with Rakhal and Balaram. The latter have not yet come back to Calcutta. Nityagopal also is staying at Brindavan.

Sri Ramakrishna : How is Rakhal?

Chunilal : He is quite well at present.

Sri Ramakrishna : Will not Nityagopal return?

Chunilal : He was still there when I left.

Sri Ramakrishna : With whom will your family come?

Chunilal : Balaram Babu told me that he would send them with some good and reliable gentleman,—he did not mention his name.

The Master is talking with Mahendra Mukherji about Narayan, a school-boy about seventeen years old. He often comes to the Master, and the Master dearly loves him.

Sri Ramakrishna : He is quite guileless; is it not so?

The very mention of the word 'guileless' fills the Master with great joy.

Mahendra : Yes, sir, quite guileless.

Sri Ramakrishna : His mother came here the other day. I was somewhat abashed to see that she was proud. She discovered that day that Captain and many of you visit me, and she must have thought that she and her son were not the only persons to come here. [All laugh.] She found some sugar-candy in a corner and praised it as good; she evidently realised that there is no dearth of food here. And I happened to ask Baburam in her presence to preserve some sweets for himself and Narayan. Ganu's Mother said the boy gives them much trouble for boat-hire to come here. His mother said to me, 'Please ask Narayan to consent to marry.' I replied, 'All that depends on one's fate; why should I put in any word?' [All laugh.] It seems he does not care for his studies; she asked me to admonish him in the matter. I said to Narayan, 'Read your books.' At that she said, 'Please tell him seriously.' [Laughter.]

"Can you tell me why Gopal does not come?"

Chunilal : He is suffering from dysentery.

Sri Ramakrishna : Is he taking any medicine?

The Master intends to go this evening to the performance of 'Chaitanya Lila' at the Calcutta Star Theatre. Mahendra Mukherji will take him in his carriage. The question arises now as to which seat commands the

The moment he heard it, he fell into a trance!

"Whenever Srimati would see a dark cloud or a peacock's throat, she would become restless with yearning. The thought of Sri Krishna would fill her soul with ecstasy and she would lose all external consciousness."

The Master pauses a little and then proceeds:

"Srimati realised Mahabhava. The love of the Gopis was absolutely disinterested. A true Bhakta never seeks anything of God. He prays to Him to grant him only Pure Devotion, and never any power or miracle."

II.

Sri Ramakrishna: It is very dangerous to possess occult powers. The Naked One, Tota Puri, told me that a great Siddha was once sitting on the sea-shore, when there arose a great storm. It caused the holy man great discomfort; so he said, 'Let the storm stop.' His words were at once fulfilled. At that moment a ship was going full sail before the wind; no sooner did the storm cease so abruptly, than the ship sank and with it all the passengers. Now the sin of causing death to so many persons accrued to the Siddha, and he lost his occult powers and went to hell.

"Once a Sadhu acquired great psychic powers and became very proud.

Occult powers
and their danger

But he was a good man and possessed the merit of hard austerities. Therefore the Lord came to him one

day in the form of a Sadhu and said, 'Maharaj, I understand you possess great occult powers.' On hearing this, the Sadhu gave him a warm reception and offered him a seat. Just then an elephant was passing by. The new-comer asked, 'Well, Maharaj, can you kill this elephant if you like?' The Sadhu replied, 'Yes, this can be done,' and he muttered some magic formulæ over a pinch of dust and threw it on the elephant, and the animal instantly fell down and died. At that the other Sadhu said, 'Your powers are wonderful! You have killed the elephant!' The Sadhu laughed. Then the new-comer said, 'I say, can you recall the elephant to life?' The Sadhu replied, 'That also can be done,' and he took another pinch of dust and pronounced some Mantrams over it and threw it on the elephant, and forthwith the elephant was alive once more. Then the other Sadhu said, 'Your powers are indeed wonderful! But, I ask you,—you have killed the elephant and you have brought it back to life—what has it profited you? Have you improved yourself, have you thereby realised God?' Saying this, he vanished into the air.

"Subtle are the ways of Dharma. None can realise God so long as there is the least trace of desire in him. A thread cannot enter the eye of a needle if there be the slightest detached fibre at its end.

"Krishna said to Arjuna, 'My friend, if

you want to realise me, you must renounce every one of the eight kinds of occult power.' Indeed, the possession of psychic powers makes man proud, and he forgets God.

"One day a squint-eyed Babu came here, and told me, 'You are a Paramahamsa,—that's very good,—you will have to perform a Swastyayana ceremony for me.' What a low-minded man! He called me 'Paramahamsa' and yet he wanted me to perform the Swastyayana ceremony!

"To cure a man by performing Swastyayana is a miracle. An egoistic man can never realise God. Do you know what egoism is like? It is like a mound of earth on which the rain-water cannot stand, but runs away. But water accumulates in low land, and the seeds sprout forth and plants grow and bear fruit. Therefore I tell Hazrah, 'Never think that you alone have the true understanding and that others are fools.'

"Love all; there is none who is other than yourself. God dwells in everything, and nothing exists without Him.

"When the Lord wished Prahlada to ask a boon of Him, Prahlada said, Why we should love all 'I am blessed with Thy vision, what more can I want?' But the Lord insisted; so he said, 'If Thou must grant me a boon, let it be that my persecutors may not have to suffer punishment!'

That is to say, God Himself tortured him in the form of persecutors, and if they suffer punishment, that would be the suffering of the Lord Himself."

III.

Sri Ramakrishna: Srimati was mad through Love. There is also the madness of Devotion. Hanuman had it,—he went to kill Rama on seeing Sita enter the fire. There is again the madness of Knowledge. I saw a Jnani who was perfectly mad in appearance. He came here shortly after the dedication of the Temple and was said to have belonged to the Brahmo Sabha of Rammohan Ray. He had a torn shoe on one foot and a cane and a pot of mango-plant in his hands. After a dip in the Ganges, he proceeded to the Kali temple—Haladhari was sitting there—and invoked the Mother with a *stotram*. He went to a dog and, holding it by the ear, ate of its food: the dog did not bark at him! A similar state once was coming over me also,—I threw my hands around Hriday's neck and cried, 'O Hriday, shall I also fall into this plight?' ^{The Master on himself}

"I had become mad: Narayana Shastri came and found me roaming about with a bamboo on my shoulder. He said, 'He is mad'.

"I could not observe the caste restrictions in that state. The wife of a low caste man used to send me some fried greens, and I would eat them.

"Once, after the feeding of the poor was over in the Temple, I took the leaves on which they had eaten and touched them to my mouth and head. On seeing that, Haladhari exclaimed, 'What have you done? You have eaten the leavings of the beggars! How would you marry your children now?' At that I became angry, and though he was my cousin and senior, I shouted at him, 'You wretch, don't you read the Gita and the Vedanta? Don't you teach that Brahman alone is real and that the world is false? And you think I shall beget children! May fire burn your Gita study!'

"(To M.) You see, mere study of books avails nothing. It is easy to utter the musical notes by mouth, but not so easy to play them on an instrument."

The Master is again narrating the story of his Knowledge-madness. He says, "I went on a short river trip with Sejo Babu. It was on that occasion that I visited Navadwipa. One day, finding the crew of the boat cooking, I went and stood near them. Sejo Babu asked me, 'Baba, what are you doing there?' I said laughingly, 'The men are cooking very nicely.' Sejo Babu understood that I would next ask the crew to give me a portion of their dishes; so he said, 'Come away, Baba, come away.'

"But now I cannot do that. My spiritual mood has changed. Now the food must be

prepared by a Brahmin observing rules of ceremonial purity, and it must be offered to God; then only can I take it.

"Oh, what states I passed through! When I went to my native village, I said to Chine Sankhari and my other boy-hood companions, 'I beg you, by your dear feet, for once utter the name of the Lord!' and threw myself at their feet. Chine said, 'This is the first ebullition of your love, therefore every one appears the same to you. When the storm comes, a screen of dust arises and all trees appear alike—the mango tree cannot be distinguished from the tamarind.'"

A Devotee: What should a householder do if he experiences any of these kinds of madness—Love-madness, Bhakti-madness or Knowledge-madness?

Sri Ramakrishna: There are two kinds of Yogis, 'hidden' and 'open.' A ^{Two kinds of} Yogi that lives in the world, is ^{Yogis} of the former kind; none can know him. A householder should renounce mentally, not outwardly.

Ram: What you say* is a consolation for children. A householder can at best be a Jnani; he cannot be a Vijnani.

Sri Ramakrishna: He may become so in the long run, if he chooses. No good comes from forcing oneself away from the world.

Ram: Keshab Sen said, 'Why do people flock to him like that? One day he will give them a bite and they will have to fly away.'

Sri Ramakrishna : Why should I bite them? I much rather tell people that they should do both this and that, perform the worldly duties as well as think of God. I do not ask them to renounce all. (Smilingly) Keshab Sen once delivered a lecture; he said, 'O God, grant us that we may plunge into the river of Thy devotion and reach the ocean of Sachchidananda!' The ladies were sitting behind the screen; I said to Keshab, pointing to them, "How can all of you dive at once? What will be their fate then? Therefore, rise out of the 'water' from time to time,—dive and rise alternately." Keshab and others had to laugh.

"Hazrah says that I love the Rajasic men most, that I love those most who have great wealth and fame. If it be so, how is it that I love Harish and Noto? How is it that I love Narendra? He has not even salt enough to season a roasted banana!"

The Master leaves his room and goes towards the Jhautala, talking with M. A devotee is following him with a brasspot and a towel. Referring to the intended visit to the Star Theatre, the Master observes, "Ram gives Rajasic advice,—what is the use of engaging such a costly seat?" The Master disapproves the idea of buying a box ticket.

IV.

At 5 P.M. the Master starts for Calcutta in Mahendra Mukherji's carriage. M., Ma-

hendra Mukherji and a few other devotees accompany him. In a short while he loses himself in Samadhi.

His Samadhi breaks after a long time ; he says, "That fellow Hazrah dares to teach me!" After a short pause, he says, "I shall drink water."—He often uses such expressions to bring his mind to the external world.

Mahendra : (to M.) May I get some refreshments for him ?

M. : No, he won't take anything now

Sri Ramakrishna : (still in ecstasy) I shall eat....

The family house of Mahendra is situated a little to the north of the temple of Madan-mohanji in Baghbazar. But his father, not being properly known to the Master, Mahendra prefers to take him to his place at Hatibagan, where he owns an oil-mill. The Master will stop there on his way to the Theatre

Sri Ramakrishna is sitting on a cot in Mahendra's drawing room, speaking about the Lord.

Sri Ramakrishna : Hearing the reading of *Chaitanya-Charitamrita*, Hazrah

Brahman and
His manifesta-
tions are one

remarked that those incidents* were all actions of Shakti and that the Bibhu—the Brahman—had no connection with them. Can there be any Shakti without the Brahman? He wants to subvert the doctrines of this place†.

* The events in the superhuman career of Sri Chaitanya.

† This place himself the Master

"I know that Brahman and Shakti are one, even as water and its coldness, or fire and its burning property, are one. He, as the Almighty One pervades all, though His power is manifest in different degrees in different things. Hazra further says that, when man realises God, he becomes endowed like Him with six kinds of majesties, and though he may not utilise them, he possesses them all the same."

M.: He must have them within his grasp!
[Laughter.]

Sri Ramakrishna: (smiling) Yes, he must have them in his hands! How mean! Indeed, he alone hankers after power and glory who has never enjoyed them. A true Bhakta never prays for them.....

The Master washes his face. A smoke has been prepared for him. He asks *M.*, "Is it evening? Then I will not smoke now. In the evening, one must stop all work and resign oneself solely to the contemplation of God." Saying this, he attempts to count the hair on his hand; if he fails, then it is evening.

V.

When the Master's carriage draws up before the Star Theatre in Beadon Street, it is 8. 30 at night. *M.*, Baburam, Mahendra Mukherji and a few other devotees have accompanied the Master. Before they buy tickets *Sj. Girish Chandra Ghosh*, manager of

the Theatre, comes to the Master's carriage and, saluting him, respectfully escorts him upstairs. Girish has heard of the Master; he is much pleased that he has come to see the performance. He takes him to a south-eastern box. M. sits beside the Master, and Baburam and a few other devotees sit behind.

The Theatre is brightly illumined. The pit and the galleries are crowded.

Performance of
Chaitanya Lila

Most of the boxes are occupied. A man is engaged to fan in each box; Girish orders one to attend in the Master's. From where he sits the Master can see the drop scene on his left and, in his child-like simplicity, he is filled with delight at the brilliant sight. Says he smilingly to M., "Ah, what a nice place! It is well that we have come here. The sight of a great concourse of people is very inspiring. I then clearly see that it is He who has become all this."

M.: Quite true.

Sri Ramakrishna: How much will they charge for the box?

M.: They will not charge anything. They are exceedingly glad that you have come.

Sri Ramakrishna: It is all Mother's glory. The curtain rises.* The attention of the

* The performance was a representation of the early life of Sri Chaitanya (or Nimai, Gouranga, or Gour, as he was variously called), founder of Vaishnavism in Bengal in the beginning of the sixteenth century. He is looked upon as an Incarnation of God, and is said to have manifested Divinity even in his childhood.

whole assemblage is focussed on the stage, where Sin and the Six Passions sit in council and behind, in a forest walk, Viveka, Vairagya and Bhakti are engaged in conversation.

Bhakti says that Gouranga has incarnated himself in Nudea and that the Vidyadharis (the celestial nymphs), the Sages and the Rishis are coming in disguise to visit him.

'Glory unto the earth, for the Lord Himself is born unto her in Nudea as Gour!'

'Behold! there come the nymphs of heaven along their azure pathway to do homage unto Him!'

'And behold the Sages and Rishis as they come, overpowered with the bliss of Love Divine!'

The Vidyadharis, the Sages and the Rishis are worshipping Sri Gouranga as the Lord incarnate.

As the Master sees them, he is filled with ecstasy and says to M., "Ah! look how beautiful!"

The Nymphs and the Sages are singing,—

Men : 'O Keshava, delighting in the woods and glades of Brindavan, Thy grace be unto us, O Krishna, Thy hapless servants!'

Women : 'O Sweet One, Thou hast stolen our hearts with the bewitching call of Thy flute!'

Chorus : 'Call on the Lord! Call on the Lord! Call on the Lord, O my mind!'

Men : 'O Child of Braja, O Vanquisher of Kaliya, Thou allayest the fear of the distressed!'

Women : 'Oh, Thy arch look and Thy arch peacock crown! They have charmed Thy Radha's soul!'

Men : 'Thou didst lift the mighty Mt. Govardhana! Forest flowers adorn Thy form! And Thou didst humble Kamsa's pride O Damodara!'

Women : 'O Dark One, revelling in the bliss of Rasa!'

Chorus : 'Call on the Lord! Call on the Lord! Call on the Lord, O my mind!'

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On hearing the Vidyadharis sing, 'Oh, Thy arch look and Thy arch peacock crown! They have charmed Thy Radha's soul!' Sri Ramakrishna loses himself in Samadhi. And the concert plays, but he knows nothing.

VI.

Another scene: A stranger has come to the house of Jagannath Misra, the blessed father of Sri Gouranga. The boy Nimai, that is, Gouranga, is seen at play, singing with his mates:

'O my Brindavan! O where is mother Yashoda? Where are my father, Nanda, and my brother, Balai?

'The twin cows, the white and the black, O where are they? And my magic flute, alas, I miss! Where can I find my shepherd friends, Sridam and Sudam?

'Ah, for the Jumna's banks! Oh, for the Bamshibata! O my shepherdesses! O my Queen! Where are they?'

The stranger-guest sits at his meal, offering the food to the Lord with closed eyes. Just then, Nimai runs to his dish and partakes from it! And it is given to the guest to know that the boy is the Divine Incarnation, and he invokes Him with a hymn on the Ten Incarnations of God! And again, when he takes leave of Jagannath Misra and mother Shachi, he sings:

'Glory unto Thee, O Lord of Eternal Bliss! O Gourachandra, Thou hast come for the salvation of the world!

'Whoso is helpless, in Thee shall find his strength, O Soul of souls! Thou art the allayer of our fears!

'In every age Thou playest! Yea, every age reveals Thee in a novel sport! A new wave rolls on, and a new tale is told. Verily Thou hast taken on Thee the world's burden!

'O Lord! take away our grief! Feed us with the Water of Thy Love, for Thou abidest in the very core of all Love-sports!

Thou art the Hope of the meek! Thou art the Redeemer of our sins! And Thou art the Chastiser of the wicked, O Lord!

Listening to the prayer, the Master is again filled with inspiration and loses himself in ecstasy.

* * * *

Place: The bank of the Ganges at Nuddea. Many Brahmin ladies and gentlemen are engaged in worship, after bathing in the holy waters. Nimai snatches off the food offerings and eats them himself! This throws one of the Brahmins into a great rage, and he cries out, 'Thou scape-grace! Thou art taking away my offerings to Lord Vishnu! Ruin seize thee!' This abuse has no effect on Nimai, who runs off with the offering. But the women cannot bear to see their beloved boy go away; they cry out to him to come back, 'Return, O Nimai, return!' But he heeds not.

One of the ladies, however, knows the charm to bring him back. She exclaims, 'Haribol!' 'Haribol!' and at once he runs back, repeating, 'Haribol!' 'Haribol!'

Mani says, "Aha!"

The Master can no longer contain himself; he looks at Mani and cries out "Aha!" and tears of love trickle down his cheeks!

He says to M. and Baburam, "Look here; if I go into ecstasy or Samadhi, do not make any fuss over it! The worldly people here will think that I am dissembling."

* * * *

Nimai has been invested with the holy thread: he is garbed in the traditional robe of a Sannyasin, and is surrounded by his mother, Shachi, and her neighbours. He is begging for alms, singing:

'A dole of alms into my bowl, O mothers!—I am a young Sannyasin, a forlorn wanderer!

'Ye that dwell in Braja, I love ye, and hence I come and come again. Lo! I starve and cry at your doors,' 'Radhe!' 'Radhe!'

'The day is done and I must go. I live on the Jamuna's lonely bank and mingle my tears with its darkly stream as it flows by, murmuring low.'

Exeunt mother Shachi and neighbours and Nimai is left alone. Now enter gods and goddesses in the guise of Brahmins and do their homage to the Incarnated Lord. They sing:

Men: 'Hail, O Lord dwelling in man's dwarfish form resplendent in Thy cool moony effulgence!

Women: 'O Charmer of the Shepherdesses' hearts! Thou lovest to move among Braja's lovely bowers!

Nimai: 'Glory to Sri Radha! Glory unto her!

Men: 'O Mate of Braja's blessed boys! Thou didst vanquish the pride of Madana!

Women: 'Oh the deluging madness of Thy love! It maddened the damsels of Braja!

Men: 'O Deluder of demons! O Narayana! O Refuge of the fear-stricken gods!

Women: 'Thou lovest to abide in Braja, craving even for the Gopis' love!

Nimai: 'Glory to Sri Radha! Glory unto her!'

The song again so transports the Master that he goes into Samadhi!

The curtain drops and the concert plays.

* * * *

Srivasa and other devotees stand conversing in front of Adwaita's house. Mukunda is singing:

'Sleep no more, O mind! Long hast thou lain in Maya's slumbers locked!

'Behold thou hast forgotten thyself and why thou camest to the earth! Open thine eyes; dream no more the evil dreams!

'Why dote on vanishing pleasures? Look! Bliss Eternal abides in thy own soul! O step out of the gloom and hail the Rising Sun!

Mukunda sings very sweetly. The Master highly admires his voice.

* * * *

Nimai is staying at home. Srivasa has come to see him. He first meets Shachi, who tearfully reproaches him: 'My son does not attend to his household duties.'

'Since Viswarupa renounced his home, my heart has ever been atremble, fearing Nimai would follow in his steps!'

Nimai is seen coming in. Says Shachi:

'Look! Look! how, like a mad man, he bathes his heart with tears! Oh tell me, how can I cure him of these unhappy moods!'

On seeing Srivasa, Nimai throws himself at his feet and, clasping them, weeps. He says:

'Ah me! Ah me! I live as yet unblest of the Bhakti of my Krishna! And my wretched days—they pass in vain! O tell me, where is Krishna? Where can I find Him? Bless me with the dust of thy holy feet; bless me that I may find my Lord Beloved!'

The tears of Sri Ramakrishna fall thick and bathe his face! He essays to speak to M., but feeling chokes his voice. He only looks on, as Nimai lies at Srivasa's feet, crying in agony, 'Ah me! I live as yet unblest of Krishna's love!'

* * * *

Nimai finds himself no longer able to teach his pupils. Therefore Gangadas, his teacher, comes to him to argue him out of his present

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course. He says to Srivasa, 'I say, Srivasa Thakur, we also are Brahmins and worship the Lord Vishnu. But you people of renunciation I see, have conspired to ruin the world!'

Sri Ramakrishna: (to M.) This is the advice of a worldly man,—'Do this as well as that.' Indeed, when a worldly man teaches, he always asks you to compromise.

M.: Yes, sir.

Gangadas argues with Nimai:

'O Nimai, you are well-versed in the Scriptures. Come, reason with me, prove which path is superior to that of the householder! You are a *grihi**. Why do you violate the prescribed rules of a householder?'

Sri Ramakrishna: (to M.) Do you see?—He instructs him to attend to 'both sides!'

M.: Yes, sir.

Nimai replies, 'I am not wilfully neglecting the duties of my household. I rather wish I could hold on to all sides! But,

'Sire, I know not why, a Secret Power calls me, drags me on! Would that I could stick to the shore! But alas! my heart listens to no counsel; it rushes headlong to plunge into the Boundless Sea!'

Sri Ramakrishna: Ah!

VII.

Nityananda has arrived at Nuddea, searching for Nimai. Nimai also has been looking for Nityananda. They meet and Nimai says:

'Blessed is my life! My dream has come to be true,—you visited me in my sleep!'

Sri Ramakrishna: (in a faltering voice) Nimai says he saw him in a dream!

* A householder

* * * *

Sri Gouranga (Nimai) has revealed himself to Srivasa in a six-handed form. Srivasa invokes him with a hymn.

The Master loses himself in ecstasy as he looks on the divine form.

Gouranga is in his mood of Divinity and, in that inspired condition, he is speaking with Adwaita, Srivasa, Haridas and other devotees. Nitai comprehends his Divine mood and sings accordingly :

' Dear friend, Krishna is yet not come to my bower !

' Oh, fetch Him, fetch Him to me !

' Lo ! Radha's heart knows none but Him !'

Listening to the song, Sri Ramakrishna is plunged into Samadhi and long he remains in that state. When the concert begins to play, he comes down to the normal plane. In the meantime, a gentleman of Khardah, about thirty-five years old, born of the holy family of Nityananda Goswami, has entered the box, and has been standing behind the Master's chair. The sight of him fills the Master with transports of exceeding joy. He holds his hand and talks endearingly to him, saying "Why not sit here?—Your presence is very inspiring !" And in great affection, he plays with his hand and fondles him by lovingly stroking his face.

When the Goswami is gone, the Master says to M., " He is a great scholar: his father is a great Bhakta. When I went to Khardah to visit Shyamasundara, his father entertained

me with a Prasadam of the Lord, one which ordinarily cannot be procured even by paying a hundred rupees.

"His features are very auspicious; a little shaking will rouse up his spiritual consciousness. The sight of him was very inspiring to me; a little more and I would have stood up." The Master means that he would have gone into Samadhi.

* * * *

The curtain rises. Nityananda enters holding his head with his hands and trying to stop the flow of blood. Madhai has struck him on the head with the broken rim of an earthen jar. But Nitai heeds not,—he is mad with love for Sri Gouranga. He comes forward to embrace Jagai and Madhai, and sings:

"Come Jagai, come Madhai, let us dance and sing the name of the Lord to our heart's content. What if ye have struck me? For once, dance and sing the name of the Lord, O brothers!

"O sing '*Haribol*,' '*Haribol*,'—the Lord of Love will clasp ye to His heart! O sing aloud the name of the Lord!

Brothers, ye have never tasted love,—once cry unto the Lord, and the moon will shine forth in the sky of your soul! In love I'll give ye the Lord's name, and in love I call ye,—come!

* * * *

Nimai is telling Shachi that he has resolved to renounce the world and become a monk. On hearing his words, Shachi falls into a swoon. A sympathetic murmur passes through the audience. But the Master is looking on, absolutely unmoved,—only a tear-drop gathers in the corner of his eye.

VIII.

The performance is over. The Master is entering the carriage when a devotee inquires how he found the performance. The Master says, laughingly, "I found the Real and the Representation identical."

The carriage is driving back to Mahendra's mill. Sri Ramakrishna is suddenly filled with ecstasy and says in loving accents, "Krishna, O Krishna, Thou art my knowledge, Thou art my life, Thou art my mind, Thou art my soul, and Thou art my body!"

And he says, "O Govinda, my soul, my life!"

After the carriage arrives at the mill, Mahendra Mukherji entertains the Master with various dainty preparations. Mani is sitting by. The Master tells him, "Here, take a little," and gives him some sweets. . .

The Master is now returning to Dakshineswar with the devotees. Mahendra Mukherji is also accompanying him for part of the way.

The Master is singing:

"O Gour, O Nitai, Thy compassion is infinite!—So it has been revealed to me, O Lords!

"I visited Kashi where the Lord of Kashi told me that God Himself has been born as Shachi's son!—I know Thee now!

"In Braja Thou playedst as a shepherd boy; but in Nudera Thou art rolling on the earth in love divine. I am told, Ye do open Thy loving arms even to the *Chandala*, O Compassionate Ones and embrace and tell him the name of the Lord!"

Mahendra tells the Master of his desire to go on a pilgrimage.

Sri Ramakrishna: (smilingly) Must love wither up even before it has sprouted forth? But come back soon. Ah, I have so often thought of visiting your place, I am glad I have done it.

Mahendra: Sir, I feel my life blessed thereby!

Sri Ramakrishna: Blessed you are already! Your father is also a nice man; I noted that day his firm faith in the Adhyatma Ramayana.

Mahendra: Sir, bless me, that I may attain devotion!

Sri Ramakrishna: You are very generous and sincere. And unless one is generous and sincere, he can never realise God. God is far, far off, from the crooked heart.

When the carriage reaches Shyambazar, Mahendra takes leave of the Master.

Sri Ramakrishna: (to M.) What has Jadu Mallik done?

M.: (aside) The Master is ever anxious for the good of all. Has he also incarnated himself like Sri Chaitanya to teach men the love of God?

CHAPTER XX.

THE DAKSHINESWAR TEMPLE,—MARCH, 1885

I.

It is 3 P. M. on Saturday, the 7th of March, 1885. The Master is sitting in his well-known room in the Temple, radiating joy amongst his devotees. Baburam, Chhota Naren, Paltu, Haripada, Mohinimohan and other devotees are seated on the floor, and with them is a Brahmin youth, who has been staying with the Master for the last three days.

Our holy mother now lives in the Nahavat and occasionally comes to the Master's room to attend on him. Mohinimohan has brought his wife and Nabin Babu's mother with him: they have gone to the holy mother in the Nahavat, where they are waiting for an opportunity, when the devotees will be off, to come to the Master and offer him their salutations.

The Master is sitting on the small cot, and, as he looks at his boy disciples, he is filled with great joy.

Rakhal no longer stays at the Temple. It is now several months since he went with Balaram to Brindavan. He has returned lately and is living at home.

Sri Ramakrishna: (smiling) Rakhal is enjoying a pension now. He is staying at home after his return from Brindavan. He has got his wife there. But he told me he

would not take any employment, although it might be worth a thousand rupees a month!

"A mood came over him as he lay here, and he told me that he did not like even my company.

"True, Bhavanath has married, but he spends the whole night in religious conversation with his wife. They pass their days talking about God. Once I told him to be a little merry with his wife. He flared up and said, 'What! should *we* also pass our time in vulgar merriment?'"

The Master then speaks of Narendra. He says,

"But I did not feel that strong yearning for him * which I felt for Narendra.

"(To Haripada) Do you go to see Girish Ghosh?"

Haripada: Yes, I often do; we are close neighbours.

Sri Ramakrishna: Does Narendra go there?

Haripada: Yes, I sometimes meet him there.

Sri Ramakrishna: What does he reply to Girish Ghosh? †

Haripada: He has been defeated in argument.

Sri Ramakrishna: No; he says, 'Girish Ghosh has such a strong faith! Why should I interfere?'

* 'For him,' i. e., for *Chhota* Narendra (*Chhota* meaning 'younger'), so called to distinguish him from the other Narendra, afterwards known as Swami Vivekananda.

† S. J. Girish often said that the Master is God Incarnate.

The brother of the son-in-law of the Judge Anukul Mukhopādhyaya has come. The Master asks him, "Do you know Narendra?"

Brother: Yes, sir. He is a very intelligent boy.

Sri Ramakrishna: He must be a good man to praise Narendra so highly. Naren came here the other day and sang with Trailokya Sannyal, but his songs appeared 'saltless'."

Baburam studies in the school where M. teaches. Looking at him, the Master says, "Where are your books? Won't you study? (To M.) He wants to maintain 'both sides'†."

"This is a very difficult path; what is the use of knowing Him only partially? Even Vashisthadeva succumbed to the bereavement of his sons! This extremely surprised Lakshmana, and he questioned Rama about it, Rama replied, 'Brother, what is there to be surprised at? He who has knowledge has also ignorance. Do you transcend both knowledge and ignorance.' If a thorn gets into the sole of your foot, you find another thorn with which you take it out and then you throw away both. So, to dislodge the thorn of ignorance, you have to procure the thorn of knowledge. And then you go beyond them both!"

Baburam: (smiling) That I want!

* Insipid.

† That is to say, the 'sides' of God and the world.

Sri Ramakrishna: (with a smile) O my child, how can you have it if you stick to both sides? If you do really want it, then come away.

Baburam: (smilingly) You draw me out.

Sri Ramakrishna: (to M.) Rakhal stayed with me, but with him it was different—his father was agreeable. But if these boys remain here, there will be trouble. (To Baburam) You are weak,—you are timid! Just see how Chhota Naren declares, ‘I’ll come away for good.’”

The Master comes down from the cot and sits on the mat amongst his boy disciples. M. sits close by him.

Sri Ramakrishna: (to M.) I am seeking for one who has absolutely renounced Kamini-Kanchana. Perhaps I think some one will stick to me; but no, every one has his counter-plea.

“A certain ghost was seeking for a companion. Now, if a man dies an unnatural death on a Tuesday or a Saturday, he becomes a ghost. So, whenever the ghost found any man falling down from a house-top, or fainting away through an accident, he would run to him, hoping that the man would become a ghost and accept him as his companion. But such was his poor lot that every one would invariably revive! And never did he get a mate!

“Just see how Rakhal has his plea of a wife! He asks, ‘What will become of my wife?’ When I touched Narendra on the chest,

he began to lose his external sense; then he cried out, 'Oh, what have you done to me? Don't you know I have my parents!'

"Why has He placed me in this condition? Chaitanyadeva became a Sannyasin so that everybody could salute him. Whoever would salute him would attain salvation!"

Mohinimohan has brought some sweet-meats to offer to the Master.

Sri Ramakrishna: Who brought these sweets?

Baburam points to Mohinimohan. The Master utters the sacred Pranava as he touches the sweets and eats a little. He then distributes the Prasadam amongst the devotees. And lo! he feeds Chhotta Naren and some other boy disciples with his own hand!

Sri Ramakrishna: (to M.) This has a meaning—God is most clearly manifest in the pure-souled! While staying in those parts*, I would sometimes feed a few of the boys with my own hand in this way. Chine Shankhari complained that I did not feed them like-wise. But how could I do it? Some of them lived clandestinely with their sisters-in-law, others with cousins!—who would feed them?"

II.

Great is the joy of the Master in the company of his pure-hearted disciples! He is stitting on the small cot, making funny imita-

* His native place, Kamarpukur.

tions of a Kirtani† to the great amusement of the devotees. . . . Kirtani and her party have come to the assembly to sing. She is lavishly dressed. She stands with a coloured handkerchief in her hand. If any respectable gentleman enters, she welcomes him even while singing, and says, 'Please come in'. And she occasionally removes the *Sari* from her arms to disclose the various ornaments that adorn them.

This mimicry of the Master makes the devotees roar with laughter. Paltu is literally rolling on the floor. Seeing him, the Master says to M., "Quite a child,—how he rolls in laughter! (To Paltu, smilingly) Don't tell all this to your father! The little regard he has left for me will also vanish: he is an 'Englishman' again.

"Some there are who will talk worlds of things at the time of daily worship. But when forbidden to talk, they make innumerable signs and gestures with closed lips,—'Bring this!' 'Bring that!' 'Huh!' 'Uhuh!'—all such things they do!

"Some one may be telling his beads, but even then he goes to bargain for fish! And as he counts the beads, he points with his finger to the fish he wants! And all his bargaining comes at that particular time! [Laughter.]

"A woman perhaps has come to bathe in the holy waters of the Ganges. She should

† A 'Kirtani' is a professional songstress who sings devotional songs.

think of God then, but lo! she gossips on no end of things! . . . 'What jewels did they offer to your son?' 'So-and-so is seriously ill!' 'Has So-and-so returned from his father-in-law's?' 'So-and-so went to see the bride,—hope they'll offer a magnificent dowry!' 'Hariṣh is very fond of me, cannot rest an hour without me!' 'I could not come all these days; the betrothal of So-and-so's daughter came off, so I was very busy!'

"She has come to bathe in the holy waters, and how she is talking on endless worldly things!"

The Master is intently gazing at Chhota Naren and, while so doing loses himself in Samadhi! Does he see God Himself in his pure-hearted disciple?

The devotees silently watch this picture of Samadhi. Where are his joy and merriment gone? An intense silence reigns in the room, as if it had been completely deserted. The Master's limbs are absolutely motionless, his eyes winkless, and he sits, like a painted portrait, with joined palms.

Some time afterward, the Master's Samadhi breaks. His suspended respiration revives and he heaves a deep sigh. His mind is slowly regaining external consciousness and he looks at his devotees.

But he is still rapt in a deep ecstatic mood. He addresses each of the devotees telling them of their future progress.

“(To Chhota Naren) I have been eager to see you. You will realise Come here occasionally. Well, which do you prefer, Jnana or Bhakti?”

Chhota Naren: Pure Bhakti!

Sri Ramakrishna: How can you *love* unless you *know* Him? (Pointing to M., smiling) How can you reverence him unless you know him?

“(To M.) But since a pure-souled devotee has asked for Pure Bhakti, it must have some meaning! To attain Bhakti all at once and directly, one must have favourable Samskara*. It is a sign of Prema-Bhakti to have the Devotion of Love. Jnana-Bhakti, *i. e.*, the Devotion of Knowledge, is a reasoned-out devotion.

“(To Ch. Naren) Let me see your body, —open your shirt.—Fairly broad chest!—Yes, you will realise—come here now and then.”

The Master is still deeply absorbed: he affectionately speaks to the other devotees.

“(To Paltu) You too will realise, but a little late.

“(To Baburam) Why do I not attract you?—Should I, after all, create any trouble?

“(To Mohinimohan) As to you, you are all right! Only a little remains to be fulfilled. But when that is done, you can no longer have your affairs of the world! Should everything go?”

* ‘Tendencies inherited from previous birth.’

So saying, the Master affectionately gazes at Mohini, looking, as it were, into the very recesses of his heart. Does Mohini think that everything should be sacrificed for God? After a while, the Master says to him, "God binds down the Bhagavat Pandit with a worldly tie otherwise who will read out the words of God to men? So, for the teaching of mankind, He retains one bondage. Mother has kept you in the world for that."

He next addresses the Brahmin youth, saying, "Give up metaphysical reasonings. Take to Bhakti! Bhakti is the essential thing. Is this the third day of your stay?"

Brahmin Youth: (with folded hands) Yes, sir.

Sri Ramakrishna: Have faith! Rely on Her; then you will not have to do anything yourself,—Mother Kali will do all!

"Jnana can at best enter the outer court. But Bhakti gets into the inner apartments!

"The Shuddha Atman is unaffected by anything. He contains both Vidya and Avidya but they cannot in any way affect Him. The air sometimes smells sweet, sometimes foul, but these sweet or foul odours do not affect the air itself. Vyasadeva wanted to cross the Jamuna river. Some Gopis also came to the same place with their loads of milk, curd and butter to go over to the other side. But there was no boat at that time, and they did not

know how to ford the river. Now it happened that Vyasadeva felt very hungry ;

The state of the
Brahma-jnani.

the Gopis therefore gave him their milk, butter and cream, and he consumed almost the whole of their supply. He then addressed the river Jamuna thus: 'Jamuna, if I have not eaten anything, thy waters must part asunder and open a pathway for us to go across!' And it came to pass exactly as he said,—the waters divided and disclosed a way between, along which Vyasadeva and the Gopis walked over to the other side.

" 'I have not eaten anything' means 'I am that Shuddha Atman, the Pure Self' which is unaffected by anything and beyond Prakriti. He neither thirsts nor hungers, nor has He birth or death! He ages not! He is immortal! And He is like unto Mt. Sumeru *!

"He who has attained to this Knowledge of Brahman is Jivan-mukta, living-free. And he clearly perceives that the Atman is quite separate from the body. When

The Jivan-mukta. man realises God, he becomes free from the illusion of identifying his Self with the body. He feels them as two separate entities, like the kernel and the shell of a cocoanut, which separate from each other when the milk within has evaporated. The Self seems to 'rattle' within the

* Mt. Sumeru, the 'golden mountains,' is, according to Hindu mythology, the axis of the universe, ever steady, immovable and unchanged.

body! Indeed, when the 'milk' of worldly mindedness has dried up, there comes Self-knowledge, and the soul and the body are realised as quite distinct from each other. The kernel of a green betel-nut or walnut cannot be separated from its shell. But when it ripens, the kernel separates from the shell,—the juice has already dried up. Indeed, with the attainment of Brahma-jnana, the 'sap' of worldly wisdom dries up.

"But that Knowledge is very hard to attain. You cannot have it for a mere wish! Some feign to possess Knowledge. (Smilingly) There was a man who was a great liar. He even declared that he had attained Brahma-jnana. One day, when somebody rebuked him, he said, "Why, this world is verily like a dream! If, then, everything is unreal, is truthfulness itself real? It is surely as false as falsehood!" [All laugh.]

III.

The Master is seated with a smiling countenance amongst his disciples on the mat. He asks them to stroke his feet. They obey.

Sri Ramakrishna says smilingly to M., "This * has a deep significance." He then places his hand on his own heart and continues, "If there is anything (Divine) in it, then (by this *Padaseva*) ignorance and delusion will vanish once for all."

The Master suddenly assumes a serious look, as if he would reveal a secret. He says

* Stroking the feet, or *Padaseva*, as it is called.

to M., "There is no outsider here. One day I had a vision—Harish was near me: I saw Sachchidananda coming out of the sheath *; having come out, He said, 'I incarnate in every age!' I thought I was delirious. So I kept quiet and listened: He Himself was saying, 'Even Chaitanya worshipped Shakti!'"

Who is Sri
Ramakrishna.

In speechless wonder, the disciples hear this revelation! And some of them think, 'Is the Sachchidananda, the Lord Himself, sitting near us in the guise of Sri Ramakrishna? Has He then descended on earth again?'

The Master speaks again. He says to M., "I saw that God has incarnated Himself perfectly, though the manifestation is only of Sattwaguna!"

The disciples marvel at this within themselves!

Sri Ramakrishna: (to M.) I was saying now to Mother, 'I can talk no more;' and I said, 'O Mother, may my mere touch awaken man's spiritual consciousness!' The power of Yoga-maya is such that She can cast a spell. In the Brindavan-leela, She displayed Her magic power; it was through Her that Subol could bring about a reconciliation of Srimati and Sri Krishna. Yoga-maya, who is the Primal Divine Energy Herself, has a power of attraction. I made an application of that power.

* The body.

"Well, do you think that those who come here are realising anything?"

M.: Yes, sir; certainly they are realising.

Sri Ramakrishna: How do you know?

M.: (smiling) Everyone says, 'Whoever goes to him, does not return to the world!'

Sri Ramakrishna: A frog fell a prey to a water-snake. But the snake could neither swallow nor eject it; and both of them suffered—the frog croaked and croaked, and the snake agonized. But if it had been seized by a cobra, it would have been silenced after two croakings! [All laugh.] (To the boy disciples) Read that book of Trailokya—'Bhakti-Chaitanya-Chandrika'! Just beg a copy of him,—it contains nice things about Chaitanyadeva.

A Devotee: But will he give it?

Sri Ramakrishna: Why, if there is a good harvest of melons, the farmer can certainly give away one or two fruits. [Laughter.] Will he not give gratis,—what do you say?

The Master tells Paltu,—“Come here, now and then.”

Paltu: Yes, I shall, when I find any opportunity.

Sri Ramakrishna: Will you go to where I go in Calcutta?

Paltu: Yes, I shall,—I shall try to.

Sri Ramakrishna: This is your calculativeness!

Paltu: But if I say otherwise than 'I shall, try' it will be a lie!

Sri Ramakrishna: (to M.) I do not mind their telling lies—they are not free.

The Master then inquires of Haripada, “Why does not Mahendra Mukherji come here?”

Haripada: I am not quite sure why.

M.: (smiling) He is practising Jnana Yoga!

Sri Ramakrishna: Not that; the other day he said he would take me to the Theatre to show me the performance of *Prahlad-Charitra*, and promised to send his carriage; but he did not. I think he does not come here for the very shame of it.

M.: One day I met Mahim Chakravarti: it seems Mahendra is a regular visitor at Chakravarti's.

Sri Ramakrishna: Why, Mahima professes Bhakti as well. He very often recites the hymn, ‘If you worship the Lord, what need then of penance?’

M. (smilingly) That is because *you* make him recite!

Sj. Girish Chandra Ghosh has only lately known the Master. Now he passes his time wholly absorbed in the thoughts of the Master.

Haripada: Girish Ghosh is nowadays seeing various visions. After going home from here, he lives in a constant mood of God-absorption and sees many visions.

Sri Ramakrishna: It may be true. When we approach the Ganges, we can see many things,—boats, steamers and what not.

Haripada: Girish Ghosh says, that formerly he would remain busy all day long,—he would down sit at his table at a fixed hour in the morning and write during the whole day. But now he cannot keep his resolve,—the moment we go to him, he begins to talk of this place! You asked him to send Narendra,—he said, 'I will hire a carriage for him.'

It is 5 P. M. Chhota Naren is preparing to go home. He is standing alone with the Master in the north-eastern veranda, receiving various instructions. He then makes his obeisance to him and departs.

The Master is seated on the small cot talking to Mohini. Mohini's wife is much overwhelmed by the death of a son. She alternately cries and laughs, but whenever she visits the Master, she becomes noticeably quiet.

Sri Ramakrishna: How is your wife doing now?

Mohini: Whenever she is here, she becomes quiet, but at home she gets very wild sometimes. One day she went to kill herself!

The Master remains thoughtful for a time.

Mohini: (imploringly) You will have to say a few words.

Sri Ramakrishna: Do not allow her to cook; that heats the brain still more. And keep her always in the company of some one or other.

IV.

The day is done. Preparations for Aratrikam are going forward in the temples. The

Master's room is lighted and incensed. The Master is seated on his small cot, and, having saluted the Divine Mother, is sweetly reciting Her blessed names! And M. alone watches there in silence.

The Master rises from the cot. M. also stands up. The Master points to the northern and the western doors and asks him to close them. M. obeys and comes out to the Master where he waits on the veranda.

He says, "I will go to the Kali temple," and, leaning on M.'s arm, goes to the terrace of the Kali temple. Before he sits down, he says, "Call him to me." M. calls Baburam.

After visiting the Mother, the Master is coming back across the court-yard saying, "Mother, O Mother! Rajarajeswari!" On reaching his room, he sits on the small cot.

A strange state has come over the Master, —he cannot touch any metallic object! This indicates, he says, that the Mother is wiping off even the last trace of the sense of possession from his mind. He now eats his meal on plantain leaves and drinks from an earthen pot! He cannot touch metal pots or plates; contact with them gives him a shock and pain in the hand, as if he were stung with a poisonous fang!

Prasanna brought a few earthen pots for the Master, but they were rather too small. The Master laughingly remarks, "The pots are very small. . . But the boy is very nice.

Tarak of Belghar enters with a friend, and makes his obeisance.

Tarak is married. His parents do not wish him to visit the Master. He at present puts up in a hired house in the city, near Bowbazar Street. The Master dearly loves him. But Tarak's companion is somewhat Tamasic and holds disparaging opinions about religion and Sri Ramakrishna. Tarak is nearly twenty years old.

Sri Ramakrishna: (to Tarak's companion) "Go, have a look at the Temple.

Companion: Oh, I have seen it before.

Sri Ramakrishna: Well, do you think it wrong on the part of Tarak to come here?

Companion: You know best.

Sri Ramakrishna: (pointing to M.) He is a Head-master.

Companion: Oh!

The Master inquires about Tarak's health and talks with him for a long time. When at last Tarak prepares to depart, the Master warns him, "O Sadhu, beware! Beware of Kamini-Kanchana! Once swallowed up by the Maya of woman, you have no hope of release! It is the bottomless pit of the Bishalakshi; whoever has fallen into it has never come out! And do not forget to come here occasionally!"

Tarak: My people do not allow me.

A Devotee: If any mother forbids her son to come here and swears that his doing so would be drinking her blood, what should he do?

Sri Ramakrishna: A mother that says such things is no mother,—she is the very personification of *Avi-dya*! And it will be no sin if you disobey her when she is an obstacle in your way to God! No blame attaches to a violation of the commands of superiors if it is for the sake of God! For Rama's sake, Bharata transgressed the injunctions of Kaikeyi; the Gopis disregarded the prohibitions of their husbands in order to see Sri Krishna; Prahlada disobeyed his father for the sake of God; Bali defied the advice of his Guru, Shukracharya, in order to please the Lord: and Bibhishana went against the wishes of his elder brother to find Rama!

"In every case, except when they forbid you to tread the path of God, you must obey them.

"Let me see your hand."

He takes Tarak's hand into his own and seems to weigh it. A while after, he says, "There is a slight (crookedness), but it will pass off. Pray to Him and come here sometimes; then it will become clear. Is it you who have hired the house at Bowbazar?"

Tarak: No, sir; they have hired it.

Sri Ramakrishna: (smiling) They or you? Is it for fear of the 'tiger'?

Does the Master call 'Kamini' a tiger?

Tarak makes his farewell salutation and departs.

The Master is lying on the small cot, seeming to be thoughtful about Tarak. He suddenly asks M., "Why am I so anxious about them?"

M. remains silent, thinking over a reply. The Master inquires again and says, "Answer!"

In the meanwhile, Mohinimohan's wife came into the Master's room and after saluting him, has been waiting in a corner. The Master refers to Tarak's companion and exclaims "Why did Tarak bring that fellow with him!"

M.: Perhaps as a mere companion of the road. It is a long way, so he brought some one with him.

The Master suddenly addresses Mohini's wife, saying, "If you die a violent death, you will become a ghost! Be warned in time! Control your mind! Is that what you have learnt after all your experience?"

Mohini is bidding farewell to the Master. He bows to the ground before him; his wife also bows down. The Master is standing by the northern door. Mohini's wife is speaking with him in a low voice.

Sri Ramakrishna: You want to stay here?

Wife: I want to live here for a time with holy mother in the Nahavat; may I?

Sri Ramakrishna: That is good! But you frighten me by talking of suicide, and there is also the Ganges near by!

CHAPTER XXI.
THE HOUSE OF DEVENDRA,—APRIL, 1885

I.

It is long past the appointed hour of 3 P. M. on the 6th day of the month of April, 1885. The sun is shining fiercely. The Master has come to see his devotees in Calcutta and pay a visit to the house of Devendra at Nimoo Goswami Lane. He is sitting in Balaram's parlour with a few devotees, conversing with M.

Our Master is in a perpetual intoxication of Divine Love, ever in the raptures of God-absorption! Though completely detached from the external world, his mind yet harbours an eager solicitude for his Antaranga disciples, that they may discover their real identities. Like a father eagerly toiling for the proper bringing up of his children, or like a bird intently working all day long for its offspring, his mind is ever yearning for his disciples!

Sri Ramakrishna: (to M.) I promised I would come at three, so I had to come. But the sun is blazing.

M.: Yes, sir, you have suffered much.

The devotees are fanning him.

Sri Ramakrishna: I have come for Chhota Naren and Baburam. Why did you not bring Purna?

M.: He does not like to come into the assembly. He fears that you will praise him

before all, and his people will know of his coming here.

Sri Ramakrishna: True, but I won't do it any more. Well, it is very nice of you to teach religion to Purna.

M.: Besides, it is mentioned in the book of Vidyasagar himself* that one should love God with all his heart and soul. It can not be helped if the authorities are displeased with such teaching.

Sri Ramakrishna: Yes, their books contain many such things, but the
Mere
writers and true
teachers.
writers themselves cannot grasp and assimilate what they teach. Only the society of spiritual men makes such assimilation possible. Only when a Sannyasin, who has truly renounced, imparts religious instruction, do men pay heed to it. A mere scholar's writings or sermons cannot make such deep impressions on men's minds. Suppose a doctor, having a pot of molasses standing by his side, advises his patient not to take molasses; will the patient observe his injunction strictly? Well, what do you think of the spiritual condition of Purna? Does he experience any Bhava †?

M.: Apparently not; there is no external manifestation of ecstasy. One day I told him that parable of yours.

* 'Poetical Selections' by Iswar Ch. Vidyasagar, was a prescribed text in the school where M. taught and Purna studied.

† A state of ecstasy in which the mind loses itself in God-consciousness.

Sri Ramakrishna: Which one?

M.: What you narrated the other day: A small 'receptacle' cannot control and conceal ecstatic moods, but a large 'receptacle,' though experiencing the deepest moods of Divine ecstasy, does not allow them to be manifest outside. You said that if an elephant enters the waters of a lake, the waters do not show the slightest agitation, but if it descends into a pool, they are violently ruffled and agitated and overflow the banks.

Sri Ramakrishna: His Bhava will not be manifest outwardly,—he belongs to a different stock. His other signs are also auspicious,—what do you think?

M.: His eyes are very bright and prominent.

Sri Ramakrishna: Mere brightness will not do; godly eyes are different. Say, did you ask him how he feels after that?†

M.: Yes sir, I had a talk with him. He has been telling me for the last five days that, whenever he thinks of God or utters His name, tears flow from his eyes and the hairs of his body stand on end.

Sri Ramakrishna: Oh, then it is all right!

After a short pause, *M.* says, "He is waiting."

Sri Ramakrishna: Who?

M.: Purna. He is perhaps waiting at the gate of his house. And if any of us go there he will run up and salute us and then go back.

† That is, after Purna's meeting with the Master.

Sri Ramakrishna: Ah! Ah!

The Master is reclining on a bolster. M. has brought with him a twelve-year-old boy of his school, named Kshirode.

M.: (to the Master) This is a very nice boy; he takes great delight in the words of God.

Sri Ramakrishna: (smiling) His eyes are like a deer's.

The boy touches the holy feet of the Master and bows low to the ground before him, and very devotedly shampoos his feet.

Sri Ramakrishna: Rakhal is now staying at home. He is also not having good health: he is suffering from a boil. I am told he is going to have a child.

Paltu and Binode are seated in front of the Master. Sri Ramakrishna smilingly asks the former, "What did you say to your father? (To M.) He made a retort to his father about his coming here. (To Paltu) What did you say?"

Paltu: I said, 'Yes, I go to him; is that wrong?' [Master and M. laugh.] I'll tell him more, if necessary!

Sri Ramakrishna: (smilingly to M.) Don't. What do you say,—should he go so far?

M.: No, sir, that will be too much. [Master laughs.]

Sri Ramakrishna: (to Binode) How are you? Why did you not go there*?

Binode: I thought of going, but I was afraid of a relapse,—I have been ill and am not doing well.

* i. e., to the Master, at Dakshineswar.

Sri Ramakrishna: Why not come with me there? The air is very pure and you will recover easily.

Chhota Naren has come. He follows the Master with a towel and will pour water for him to wash his face. M. also follows him. Ch. Naren washes the feet of the Master as he sits in the northern corner of the western veranda. Says Sri Ramakrishna to M., "Very hot!"

M.: Yes, sir.

Sri Ramakrishna: How do you live in such a small house? Is it not very hot up-stairs?

M.: Yes, sir, it is.

Sri Ramakrishna: Moreover, your wife is suffering from brain complaint; keep her in a cool place.

Sri Ramakrishna: Yes, sir, I have asked her to sleep in a room downstairs.

The Master returns to the parlour and asks M. why he did not go to Dakshineswar last Sunday.

M.: There is no one else to look after my wife, and she is suffering from brain complaint.

The Master is now in a carriage on the way to Devendra's house with Ch. Naren, M. and a few other devotees. He is full of the thoughts of Purna. He says to M., "A very large 'receptacle'! Or how could he make me do *japam* for him? But he does not know all that!"

The devotees are astonished to hear that the Master did *Japam* for Purna!

Sri Ramakrishna: You could have brought him here to-day. Why did you not?

Seeing Ch. Naren laugh, the Master himself is laughing and all the devotees join in the laughter. The Master joyously points to Ch. Naren and says, "Look, look! how innocently he laughs, as if he knows nothing! But his mind is quite free of all those three—'land,' 'wife' and 'rupee.' Indeed, until the last trace of Kamini-Kanchana has vanished from the mind, one cannot realise God."

Once at Dakshineswar, the Master said to Devendra, "I am thinking of going to your home some day." Devendra replied, "I also have come to-day to beg the same favour from you. You will have to come on the next Sunday." The Master agreed, but he said, "Your income is small; do not invite too many people. The carriage-hire also will run to a good amount." Devendra laughingly said, "What though my income is small? 'One can run into debt for eating clarified butter!'"* On hearing this, the Master laughed for a long time.

In a short while, the Master arrives at Devendra's house, and cautions him, "Devendra, do not make any elaborate arrangements for my entertainment: a little refreshment will do; I am not very well to-day."

II.

The Master is sitting in Devendra's drawing room on the ground floor of his house,

* This is a maxim ascribed to the materialistic school of Hindu philosophy.

surrounded by the joyous assembly of his devotees. It is past evening, and the room is well lighted. Ch. Naren, Ram, M., Girish, Devendra, Akshay, Upendra and many other devotees are squatting near the Master. Looking at a boy disciple, he is filled with great joy. He says, "He has not the least trace of those three things that bind man to the world, —'land,' 'money' and 'wife'!"* If our mind is attached to them, it cannot be fixed in God. He had a vision, too! (To the disciple) Tell us what you saw!"

• *Disciple*: (with a smile) I saw heaps of dirt with some men sitting on them and others sitting at a short distance!

Sri Ramakrishna: He saw the condition of the worldly people who are forgetful of God. And thus it is that all these desires are vanishing from his mind! And if the mind is detached from Kamini-Kanchana, what need one fear any more?

"Oh! how strange! I myself had to practise Japam and meditation for a long time before I could get rid of them! How is it that these have left his mind so quickly? And is it so easy for lust to go? Even I felt a queer sensation in my heart after six months! I then threw myself on the ground under a tree and cried out, 'Mother, if it comes to that, I will cut my throat with a knife!'

* That is to say, desire for land, money and wife.

“When Kamini-Kanchana leaves the mind, what remains? Only Brahmananda, the Bliss of God, remains!”

Shashi, a student of the third year class of Vidyasagar's College, has been recently paying visits to the Master. The Master refers to him, saying, “That boy comes to me: I have noticed that his mind will sometimes think of money. But there are some whose minds will never do it! And some of the boys will never marry!”

The devotees silently listen.

Sri Ramakrishna: It is indeed extremely difficult to recognise the Divine Incarnation until and unless Kamini-Kanchana has totally vanished from the mind. A seller of egg-apples, on being asked the value of a diamond, said, ‘I can offer only nine seers of egg-apples in exchange,—not a single fruit more.’

All the devotees laugh out to hear this, and Ch. Naren laughs the loudest. The Master finds that he has caught the meaning in a flash, and remarks to the other devotees, “How keen is his intellect! Nengta* also could intuitively understand everything,—Gita, Bhagavatam or any other Scriptures.

“This is certainly a wonderful thing, the renunciation of Kamini-Kanchana from boyhood! It falls to the lot of few.’ Otherwise,

* Nengta (‘The naked one’) is the designation the Master applied to his Guru, Totapuri.

it is as though the mango had been stained by hails and can neither be offered to God nor be eaten by oneself.

"There are men who did many sins in their early years; but in their old age they are taking the name of the Lord;—this is certainly better than nothing.

"The mother of a certain Mallik, belonging to a very noble family, one day asked me about the prostitutes, whether or not they can attain salvation. She herself had done many ugly things in the past, so she put that question to me. I said, 'Yes, they will have salvation, if they weep from the bottom of their soul and vow that they will not do such things any more.' What will it avail if you merely repeat the Lord's name? Your tears must be sincere!"

III.

Now begins the Kirtan with the play of Khol and cymbals, and the Kirtaniya* sings:

"Oh, how can I tell you what a vision greeted my eyes at Bharati's hut! It beamed with celestial light,—the golden form of Sri Gouranga; and love flowed in a hundred streams from his eyes!"

"Yea, love has made him mad, and, like a mad elephant, he sings and dances and rolls on the earth, bathing his heart with tears! In tears he sings the name of the Lord with a lion's mighty voice, a voice that fills heaven and earth with its triumphant roars! And again, in the lowliest spirit, he holds the grass-blade in his teeth,† and begs with folded hands at every door to be released from this service of Love!"

* A professional singer of Kirtan.

† This is a sign of submission.

"Lo! having shorn his lovely locks, how he has taken the mendicant's rags! Ah! such devotion, such love!—the sight has melted my heart. The untold agonies of men have made him give up his all, that he may bestow his Love on them! Oh that Premadas may surrender himself at Gouranga's blessed feet, and wander, his servant, from door to door!"

The song has filled the Master with ecstasy. The Kirtaniya again sings, describing the state of the Shepherdesses of Braja when they were forsaken by Sri Krishna, and were searching for their Beloved in a grove of Madhavi creepers*,—

"O Madhavi, give me my Sweet One! O give Him, give Him, to me! He is mine, give Him back, and make me forever thy grateful slave!

"Knowest thou, not, He is my very soul, that I cannot live without Him, even as the fish cannot live out of water? Him, thou hast concealed, O Madhavi!

"I am but a timid, guileless girl, so thou hast cheated me of my Beloved! Lo, I die without my Sweet One! Look, Madhavi! I die without seeing my Sweet One!"

To which Sri Ramakrishna adds:

"How far is Mathura, where lives the Lord of my soul?"

Sri Ramakrishna has fallen into Samadhi; his body is absolutely motionless. When after a long time, he comes down to the normal plane, he is still rapt in an intense mood, and talks alternately with the devotees and the Divine Mother!

Sri Ramakrishna: Mother, draw him to Thee; I can worry myself no more!

"(To M.) My mind is a little inclined towards your brother-in-law.

"(To Girish) You say many abusive and indecent things,—but that does not matter; it is better they come out. Some have this

* A spring-creeper with sweet fragrant flowers.

disease of using abusive language,—the more it seeks an outlet, the better !

"There is a good deal of fuss when the Upadhis* are destroyed: the wood crackles when it burns, but the sound stops when the burning is over.

"Daily you will grow purer and purer ! Daily you will make greater and greater progress ! And men will wonder at you !

"I may not come many more times, but no matter ; you will realise yourself."

The Master's rapturous mood is deepening again. He converses with the Mother: "O Mother, what credit is there in making a good man better? O Mother, what is the use of killing a man who is already dead? If Thou canst kill him who still stands erect,—then that will be Thy greatness !"

After a short pause, he suddenly exclaims, "I have come here from Dakshineswar. I go, O Mother!" as if a little child were responding to his mother calling from a distance! He again relapses into Samadhi and remains absolutely still!

The Master mutters out, "I won't eat *luchi*." A few Goswamis of the neighbourhood come to see the Master. They depart.

IV.

The Master is cheerfully talking with his devotees. It is the month of April, and it is very hot in Calcutta. Devendra has made a nice preparation of ice-cream with which he now entertains the Master and the devotees.

* 'Limiting adjuncts.'

The Master's child-like delight knows no bounds at the ice-cream. The devotees also are highly delighted with it, and Mani says in a low voice, "Encore! Encore!"—this makes them all burst into laughter.

Sri Ramakrishna: We have had a nice Kirtan! It well describes the condition of the Gopis—'O Madhavi, give me my Sweet One!'

"The state of the Gopis is the state of love-madness. How wonderful! They are mad for Krishna!"

One devotee points to another, saying, "His is Sakhibhava,—the Bhava of the copis."

Ram: He has both the Bhavas,—Madhura Bhava, as well as the stern outlook of Jnana.

Sri Ramakrishna: What is it?

The Master then talks about Surendra.

Ram: I sent him word, but he is not come.

Sri Ramakrishna: He gets too tired after office work.

A Devotee: Ram Babu is writing about you.

Sri Ramakrishna: (smiling) What is he writing?

Devotee: His subject is 'The Devotion of the Paramahansa'.

Sri Ramakrishna: Oh! Then Ram will have great fame!

Girish: (smiling) That is because he is your disciple.

Sri Ramakrishna: I have no disciples. I am the servant of the servant of Rama!

A few gentlemen of the Lane come to see the Master. But the Master is not pleased

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with them. He says, "What a place is this ! I find none here !"

Devendra now takes him into the inner apartments and entertains him with refreshments. When the Master returns to the drawing room, Upendra and Akshay shampoo his feet. The Master says in praise of the ladies of the house, "Very nice ladies ! They come from the village, so they are very devout !"

The Master begins singing. Who can measure the depth of his superhuman moods ? Is it the joyful recollection of his own moods that flows out in sweet music ? He sings :

"Who will know the Divine Man till he has become the same himself.

* . * . *

"Stand, Darvesh, with thy blessed bowl ! Let me gaze at thy heavenly face !"

* . * . *

"A Fakir * has come to us,—ever absorbed in moods Divine ! He is the Thakur † of the Hindoos and the Pir § of the Mussalmans !"

Devendra takes the Master to his carriage. It is on its way to Dakshineswar. The Master says to M., "I have taken a good deal of *kulpi* †. Will you bring four or five of them for me ? . . My mind is being attracted towards these boys,—Chhota Naren, Purna and your brother-in-law."

M. : Dwija ?

Sri Ramakrishna : No ; Dwija is all right, —my mind is going towards the elder one.

* Mendicant. † The object of worship. § A Saint.

† An ice-cream preparation in a conical tin tube.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SHYAMPUKUR HOUSE,—OCTOBER, 1885

I.

It is the 18th of October, 1885, the tenth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Aswin,—the day of the Vijaya. Sri Ramakrishna is ill. He is staying in a house at Shyampukur, under the treatment of Calcutta doctors. The disciples are in constant attendance, though they have not yet formally renounced the world.

It is eight in the morning of early winter. Though ill, the Master is sitting on his bed like a child of five years, knowing nothing but the Mother. Navagopal, M. and a few other devotees are waiting in the room. Surendra comes in and sits down. His family celebrated the autumnal worship of the Divine Mother. But the Master could not attend it in the present state of his health: he sent some of the devotees to visit the Mother's sacred image.

To-day is Vijaya*, and Surendra is disconsolate. He says in heart-touching tones, "I have fled away from home!"

Sri Ramakrishna: (to M.) What does it matter? May Mother abide in his heart!

Surendra is crying unto the Mother, pouring out the agony of his heart to Her in prayers. The Master gazes at him and cannot

* The Divine Mother returns to Her celestial home on Mt. Kailasa on this day, after accepting three days' worship at Her devotees' home. The sadness of that day is indescribable.

restrain his tears. Looking at M., he says with a choking voice, "What Bhakti! Ah, what a Bhakti he has indeed!"

"(To Surendra) Last evening,—it was at 7 or 7-30,—I had a vision,—I saw your worship-hall; the Mother's image was there, and it was all full of effulgence! This place and that hall had become joined into one,—a stream of light as it were, was flowing between the two places, this house and yours!"

Surendra: I was at that time crying to the Mother in the worship-hall. My elder brothers had gone upstairs. And methought Mother said, 'I will come again!'

At 11, the Master takes his diet. Mani is pouring water for him to wash his mouth.

Sri Ramakrishna: (to Mani) Rakhal is suffering from indigestion caused by the Bengal gram *dal*. Sattwic food is desirable. Have you not seen what the Gita says? Dont you read it?

Mani: Yes, sir, it speaks of 'temperate eating'. Sattwic food, Rajasic food

The Gita. and Tamasic food, and Sattwic kindness, Rajasic kindness and Tamasic kindness, and Sattwic ego,—all these are mentioned in the Gita.

Sri Ramakrishna: Have you got a copy with you?

Mani: Yes, sir, I have.

Sri Ramakrishna: It is the essence of all Scriptures.

Mani: Just as you speak of going to Him through diverse paths, the Gita mentions various ways of knowing God—those of Jnana, Bhakti, Karma and Dhyana.*

Sri Ramakrishna: Do you know what Karma Yoga is? It is to surrender the fruits of all your actions to God.

Mani: Yes, sir, I have found this in the Gita. It also speaks of three ways of doing Karma.

Sri Ramakrishna: What are they?

Mani: First, one may perform Karma for attaining Knowledge; secondly, for the teaching of mankind; and thirdly, under the impulse of one's nature.

After washing his mouth, the Master is chewing betel. He takes a portion of it from his mouth and gives that to Mani.

II.

The Master is talking with M. about Dr. Sarkar†. M. was at his place yesterday to report the Master's condition.

Sri Ramakrishna: What did you talk about?

M.: There is a large number of books in Doctor's room. I took out one to read and, now and then, read out a passage to him. It was a work of Sir Humphrey Davy, affirming the necessity of Divine Incarnation.

* *Dhyana* is meditation

† Dr. Mahendra Lal Sarkar, the renowned physician of Calcutta.

Sri Ramakrishna : Indeed? What did you read to him?

M. : There was one passage that ran: 'Divine Truth must be made human truth to be appreciated by us.' Hence the necessity of Divine Incarnation.

Sri Ramakrishna : It is a very nice saying!

M. : The writer used a figure of speech to explain himself saying that we cannot look at the sun itself, but we can look at the reflected rays.

Sri Ramakrishna : Very fine! Anything else?

M. : There was another passage,—'True knowledge is Faith.'

Sri Ramakrishna : This is quite a nice saying: if you have faith, you have all!

M. : And the Sahib had a dream, too,—of Roman gods and goddesses.

Sri Ramakrishna : Indeed, are there such books? Assuredly, God himself is working there. Anything else?

M. : They speak of doing good to the world. So I told him one of your stories.

Sri Ramakrishna : (smiling) Which one?

M. : Your story about Sambhu Mallik. He told you that he desired to spend his money for founding schools and hospitals for the benefit of the people. I told the Doctor how you replied

The ultimate value of philanthropy.

to it by asking him whether he would want God to build schools and hospitals for him, if He were to appear before him. And I told him another thing.

Sri Ramakrishna : Yes, those who are born to work are a different class of men. What is the other thing?

M. : I said, if a man wants to visit the Mother Kali, what is the use of his merely giving alms to the beggars on the way? He had better somehow visit the holy image first; he, may do charity to his heart's content afterwards.

Sri Ramakrishna : Anything else?

M. : I told him that many of those who come to you have conquered lust. To this the Doctor replied, 'Do you know that my lust also is gone?' I said, 'You are a great man; it is no wonder that you have conquered lust. But even insignificant men have vanquished their passions by being in his company,—that is certainly to be wondered at.' I then told him what you said to Girish Ghosh.

Sri Ramakrishna : (smiling) What did I say?

M. : You told Girish Ghosh that the Doctor had not yet been able to supersede him. I mean that talk about Divine Incarnation.

Sri Ramakrishna : Tell him (Dr. Sarkar) about the doctrine of Divine Incarnation*. An 'Avatar' is one who grants salvation. And there are ten, or twenty-four, or an infinite number of Avatars.

* In Sanskrit, 'Avatara.'

M.: He appears to take a keen interest in Girish Ghosh. He always asks me if he has completely given up the drinking habit. He has kept a strict eye on Girish Ghosh.

Sri Ramakrishna: Did you tell Girish Ghosh about it?

M.: Yes, sir, I did, and also to give up drinking altogether.

Sri Ramakrishna: What did he say to it?

M.: He said, 'As you say so, I take that as the behest of Master himself. But I won't promise anything.'

Sri Ramakrishna: Kalipada told me that he had given up completely.

III.

Afternoon. The Doctor has come to visit the Master. The Doctor's son, Amrita, and Hem have come with him. Narendra and other devotees are also present.

The Master is speaking aside to Amrita.

He asks, "Do you have *Dhyana*?"
 and says, "Do you know what the state of *Dhyana* is? The mind must become like a continuous flow of oil,—there should be only one thought, that of God, and no other thoughts should intervene!"

He speaks with the devotees.

Sri Ramakrishna: (to Doctor) Your son does not believe in Divine Incarnation. It does not matter if he does not believe. Your son is a nice boy. And why not? Does the

mango tree of the 'Bombay' species ever bear a sour fruit? How firm is his faith in God! He indeed is a man whose mind is fixed in Him! There are '*manush*', men in name only, and '*man-hush*' knowing men. He who has the spiritual awareness, who is 'conscious' and who is fully convinced that God alone is real and all else is false, he indeed is a 'man-hush,' a knowing man!

"What harm is there if he does not believe in Divine Incarnation? It is enough if he believes that God exists and that all beings and the universe are His manifestations, regarding Him as he would a rich man who has extensive gardens.

"Some say that there are ten Avatars, others twenty-four, and others, again, say there are innumerable Avatars.

"Wherever there is a special manifestation of His power, there is Avatar. This is what I believe.

"There is another doctrine that it is He who has become all this, just as a *bel* fruit is composed of all its parts; it is seeds, pulp and shell. That which is the Absolute has also its Relative aspect, and that which is the Relative has also its Absolute aspect. You cannot know the Relative without knowing the Absolute; and it is only because there is the Relative that you can transcend it step by step and reach the Absolute.

The Absolute
and the Relative.

"So long as you have egoism, you cannot transcend the Relative. It is by the negation of all phenomena through Dhyana that you can realise the Absolute. But nothing can be left out of count, as I said of *bel* fruit."

Doctor: Quite true.

Sri Ramakrishna: Kacha attained Nirvikalpa Samadhi. When his mind was coming down to the sense plane, he was asked, 'How do you feel now?' He replied, 'I feel that the universe is interpenetrated by Him, He is immanent in everything! I see that it is He who has become everything, and I do not know what to accept and what to reject!'

"The fact is that we have to realise Him both as the Absolute and the Relative and then to live as His servant.

"Hanuman realised Him both as Sakara and Nirakara; he then lived as His servant and Bhakta."

Mani: (aside) So we have to accept both the Absolute and the Relative as equally true! And, indeed, since the time Vedanta spread into Germany, the German philosophers also have been propounding the same theory. But the Master insists that man must renounce everything completely; he must give up Kamini-Kanchana: only then can he realise God as the Absolute and the Relative;—he must become a true Tyagi, absolutely detached from the world.

“ Here it is I find a great difference between the Master and those European philosophers.”

IV.

The Doctor says that God created men, destining their souls for infinite progress. He does not believe that one individual can be superior to another. He therefore cannot accept the doctrine of Divine Incarnation. He says: “ Infinite progress! If that cannot be, what is the use of living five or six years more?—I would rather hang myself with a rope round my neck!

“ Avatar! What is that? To humble myself before a man who excretes dirt and urine? But ‘Reflection of God’s Light’—yes, that I can admit.”

Girish: (smiling) But you have not seen God’s Light!

The Doctor pauses for a suitable reply; a friend whispers something into his ear.

Doctor: (to *Girish*) But you also have not seen anything but the Reflection!

Girish: I see It! I see the Light! I will prove that Krishna is an Avatar, or I shall cut off my tongue!

Sri Ramakrishna: All this is useless talk. It is like the ravings of a delirious patient. A patient cried in delirium, ‘I’ll drink a jar of water! I’ll eat a pot of rice!’ The doctor said, ‘Yes, yes, you will have all these. We shall give you whatever you want, when you are convalescent.’

"As long as the clarified butter is not thoroughly heated, it hisses and crackles, but on being sufficiently heated, it becomes silent.

"As is your mind, so is your conception of God. I have noted that rich people decorate their walls with the Queen's pictures. But devotees keep pictures of gods and goddesses in their homes.

"Lakshmana said, 'O Rama, even Vasistha is overcome by grief at his son's death!' Rama replied, 'Brother, whoever has knowledge has also ignorance; whoever has the idea of light has also the idea of darkness. Do you go beyond both knowledge and ignorance!' That state is attainable only through a most intimate communion with the Lord, and it is called 'Vijnana.'

"When a thorn enters the sole of a man's foot, he has to procure another thorn. With that he removes the thorn in his foot, and then throws both of them away. Similarly, when the thorn of ignorance has been removed with the thorn of knowledge, both the thorns of ignorance and knowledge have to be thrown aside.

"Perfect Knowledge has its signs,—reasoning ceases completely: just as I said, the clarified butter hisses and crackles so long as it is not heated enough."

Doctor: But this Perfect Knowledge does not last permanently! If everything is God why is it that you are posing as a Paramahansa and

these people are serving you? Why do you not remain silent always?

Sri Ramakrishna: (smiling) Water is always water, whether it is calm or agitated.

"And there is another thing: Why should

Voice of God. I not rather obey the 'Mahut-Narayana'? The Guru had taught his disciple that all things were Narayana. A mad elephant was coming by, but the disciple did not move out of its way, for he had faith in the words of his Guru,—the elephant itself was Narayana. Although the 'Mahut*' cried at the top of his voice that every one should run away, he did not pay heed to it; so the elephant came rushing on and dashed him to the ground. He did not die however; his face was bathed for a long time and he was brought to his senses. Then some one asked him, 'Why did you not move away?' He replied, 'Why should I? Gurudeva said that everything is Narayana.' At that the Guru remarked, 'My child, why then did you not obey the Mahut Narayana?'

"It is He who abides within as the Pure Mind, the Pure Intelligence. I am the machine, He is worker of the machine; I am the house, He is the tenant of the house."

Doctor: Let me also ask you, why is it, then, that you ask me to cure you?

Sri Ramakrishna: That is only as long as the 'jar of my ego' remains. Suppose there is

* Driver of an elephant.

a vast ocean, full on all sides, and there is a jar immersed in its waters. There is water both inside and outside the jar, but the water cannot become one till you break it. He it is who has allowed this 'jar of the ego' to remain.

Doctor: What are these then, your 'ego' and all that you speak of? You must explain them! Do you mean to say that He is playing tricks on us?

The Differen-
tiated Ego.

Girish: How do you know, sir, that He is not playing tricks?

Sri Ramakrishna: (smiling) It is He who has allowed this 'ego' to remain. That is His play, His Leela! A king has four sons; they are all princes, but when they play, one becomes the minister, another the policeman. A prince, yet playing as a policeman!

"(To Doctor) Let me tell you, if you ever realise the Self, you will have to admit the truth of all this. His vision removes all doubts."

Doctor: But all my doubts are not cleared!

Sri Ramakrishna: Know this much from me. If you want to know further, you must pray to Him in the secrecy of your heart. Ask Him why He has so ordained. The son can give only a measure of rice to the beggar; but if the beggar has to be given the train fare, the master of the house will have to be applied to.

The Doctor is silent.

Sri Ramakrishna: You are fond of reasoning,—all right, let me reason a little. According to the Jnani, there cannot be any Avatar. Sri Krishna said to Arjuna, 'You say that I am the Divine Incarnation,—come, let me show you one thing.' When Arjuna had followed him a short distance, Sri Krishna asked him, 'What do you see?' 'A large tree,' he replied, 'on which blackberries are growing in bunches.' Sri Krishna said, 'These are not blackberries. Go nearer.' Then Arjuna found that bunches of Sri Krishnas were growing on the tree! 'Do you see now,' said Sri Krishna, 'how innumerable are the Sri Krishnas like myself that are growing here?'

"Kavirdas said of Sri Krishna, 'He danced like a monkey to the clapping of Shepherdesses!'

"As you go nearer and nearer to God, you will find less and less of His attributes. A Bhakta had a vision of the ten-handed Mother. On advancing further, he saw Her as six-handed. Proceeding further still, he beheld the vision of the two-handed Gopala. The more he progressed, the less became the manifestation of His glory, till at last he realised Him as Light, shorn of all manifestations!

"Just listen to a Vedantic argument: A Jnana Yoga. magician came to a king to display his skill. When he receded a little, the king found that a man was coming towards him on horseback, brilliantly arrayed

with weapons in his hands. The king and the assembly began to analyse the real out of the apparition,—the horse was not true, nor the brilliant robes, nor the weapons. They at last saw that the man was really standing alone. That is to say, the Brahman alone is real and the world is false. Nothing can survive analysis."

Doctor: I do not object to this.

. *Sri Ramakrishna*: But it is very difficult to get rid of this illusion: it lingers even after the attainment of Knowledge. A man dreamt of a tiger, and even after his awakening his heart continued to palpitate! Some thieves came to rob a field. In the field there was a scarecrow made like a human form, which so much frightened the thieves that they did not dare enter. One, however, approached the object and found that it was a mere straw image; so he returned to his fellows and bade them have no fear. But they still hesitated to come in and said that their hearts were palpitating. At that he went back and laid the figure down on the ground and said, 'It is nothing.'—'Not this,' 'Not this.'

Doctor: These are all very nice sayings!

Sri Ramakrishna: (smiling) Yes,—what kind of sayings?

Doctor: Nice sayings!

Sri Ramakrishna: Then say, 'Thank you!'

Doctor: Don't you see my mind?—And I take so much pains to come here to see you!

Sri Ramakrishna: (smiling) No, no; say something for the sake of the ignorant. Bibhishana did not want to accept the kingship of Lanka. He said, 'O Rama, I have you; what do I care for the kingdom?' But Rama replied, 'Bibhishana, be you king for the sake of the ignorant, for the sake of those who wish to know what wealth you have secured by serving me. Be you the king for their conviction.'

Doctor: But there are no such ignorant men here.

Sri Ramakrishna: (smiling) No, here you have both conches and pond-snails! [All laugh.]

V.

The Doctor is giving medicine to the Master. He takes two globules and says, "I give you two globules,—Prakriti and Purusha!" [Laughter.]

Sri Ramakrishna: (smilingly) Yes, they are always together. Have you not observed the pigeons, how they cannot live separate? Wherever there is Purusha, there is Prakriti, and wherever Prakriti is, there is Purusha.

It is the day of Vijaya. The Master invites the Doctor to a little refreshment. The devotees place a dish of sweets before him. As he eats, the Doctor remarks, "I give you thanks for these sweets, not for your valuable instructions. Why should I give such thanks with words of mouth?"

Sri Ramakrishna: (smiling) To have one's mind ever fixed in Him! What more should I say?—And meditate a little on Him! (Pointing to Chhota Naren) Look here, his mind becomes completely immersed in God. Those things which I was telling you,—

Doctor: Tell all of them.

Sri Ramakrishna: A man must be given according to his power of digestion. Can all men accept and appreciate those things? I told them to you,—that is different. The mother has procured a fish. But all the children have not the same power of digestion. So she prepares *polao* for one and soup for another,—his stomach is not healthy. [Laughter.]

Doctor Sircar departs.

The day of Vijaya is being observed. The devotees prostrate themselves before the Master and take the dust of his sacred feet. Then they embrace one another and there is great joy. In spite of his serious illness, the Master has thrown his disciples into a blissful oblivion, and for a long time they exchange greetings of love and entertain one another with sweets.

Chhota Naren, M. and a few others are sitting near the Master, listening to his words. At last he refers to the Doctor, saying, "Doctor will not require much instruction. When the trunk of the tree has been sufficiently cut, the cutter moves off to a distance. The tree then falls down of itself."

Chhota Naren: (smiling) All is principle!

Sri Ramakrishna: (to M.) The Doctor has changed a good deal,—has he not?

M.: Yes, sir. He becomes confounded when he comes here. He never speaks of prescribing medicine for you. Only when we remind him, he says, 'Yes, yes'!

Some of the devotees have been singing in the drawing room. When they come to the Master's room, he says, "You were singing, but why out of tune? There was once a *Vetala-siddha*; it was like that!"* [All laugh.]

A young man, very foppishly dressed and wearing eye-glasses, has come. He is a relation of Ch. Naren. The Master says to Ch. Naren "Look here; a young man was passing along this road, dressed in a shirt with a breast plate. How he walked! Sometimes he displayed the plate by removing his muslin scarf and looked to see if any one was admiring him. But when he walked, he was knock-kneed! [All laugh.]

"A peacock has a beautiful tail, but its feet are very ugly! [Laughter.] The camel is very awkward: everything is ugly about it!"

Young man: But its conduct is good.

Sri Ramakrishna: Yes, good indeed, but it browses on prickles, and though its mouth bleeds, it still feeds on prickles! The worldly people, though their children die, clamour for more children!

* A '*Vetala-siddha*' is a tamer of a *Vetala*, i.e., a ghost. The point of the humour is the fun the Master makes on the word *Vetala*, which otherwise means 'out of tune'.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SHYAMPUKUR HOUSE,—OCTOBER, 1885

I.

The Master is staying in the Shyampukur house for treatment.

It is 10 A. M. on Friday, the 23rd of Oct., 1885, the day of the full moon, following the autumn festival of the Divine Mother.

M. is helping the Master with his socks. The Master smilingly asks, "May I not divide the comforter and wear it as a sock? It is so warm!" M. smiles.

Sri Ramakrishna refers laughingly to a long conversation he had with Dr. Sircar last night and observes, "How I told him, to say, '*Tuhu, Tuhu* *'!"

Chhota Naren reminds him how he told the Doctor that, although men suffer so terribly in the world, they still think that they are quite happy. Their fingers are lacerated by thorns and bleed profusely, yet they affirm that the fingers are quite safe. These thorns will have to be burnt to ashes in the fire of Knowledge. He then remarks, "That was a nice observation you made last night about the thorn and its destruction in the fire of Knowledge."

* The reference is to the Master's parable of the calf which cries, '*Ham hai*,' i. e., '*I am*,' and at last learns through suffering to say, '*Tuhu*,' i. e., '*Thou art*.'

Sri Ramakrishna: I used to have the actual realisation of these things. One day, as I was passing behind 'the Kuthi', my whole body burst into flames like the fire of oblation!

"Padmalochan told me that he would invite an assembly of Pandits and declare my spiritual realisations, but he died shortly afterwards."

At eleven o'clock, Mani goes to Dr. Sircar to report the condition of the Master. The Doctor evinces an eager delight in learning more about the Master and says laughingly, "Did you notice how I told him that in order that one may say, '*Tuhu, Tuhu*,' one must fall into the hands of a cotton-carder?"

Mani: Yes, you are right. One cannot be rid of egoism unless he falls into the hands of a capable teacher. How nicely he spoke last night of Bhakti as being like a woman and privileged to enter 'the inner apartments'!

Doctor: Yes, that is a nice saying. But yet one cannot discard knowledge.

Mani: Paramahamsadeva does not say that. He accepts both Jnana and Bhakti, both Nirakara and Sakara.—Under the cooling influence of Bhakti, a portion of 'the water' freezes into ice, but when the Sun of Knowledge shines, the ice melts into water again. That is to say through Bhakti Yoga you realise Him as Sakara and through Jnana Yoga, as Nirakara.

"And you see, he feels God so near and close to him that he always converses with

Him. Like a little child, he complains to Him of his suffering.

“What a power of observation! He saw a specimen of a fossil in the Museum. This at once suggested to him a simile for the society of holy men: An object becomes a fossil by being near a stone; even so man becomes holy by keeping the company of holy men.”

Doctor: Ishan Babu talked of Avatara. What is Avatara,—to look upon man as God!

Mani: What is the use of interfering with others' faith?

Doctor: Yes, what use?

Mani: How he made us laugh when he said that a certain man refused to believe that a house had collapsed, although he himself saw it, because the event was not mentioned in the newspaper!

The Doctor remains silent, for the Master had said to him, “Your science does not speak of Divine Incarnation; therefore there can be no Divine Incarnation!”

At twelve o'clock, the Doctor gets into his carriage with Mani. He will visit some of his patients before going to the Master.

The other night, at the invitation of Girish he attended the performance of ‘Buddhaleela’. He says to Mani, “Why did he represent Buddha as the Incarnation of Vishnu? He had better have called him the Incarnation of Compassion.”

The Doctor sets down Mani at the corner of Cornwallis Square.

II.

3 P. M. A few devotees are sitting in the Master's room. He has become impatient for the Doctor and is repeatedly asking, "When will he come?" "What is the time now?" But to-day the Doctor is due only after evening.

A sudden change has come over the Master: he has become verily like a little boy!

He is sitting with a pillow in his lap as if caressing and suckling a child with great affection! Absorbed in an ecstatic mood, his face is lit up with a child-like smile; and he has worn his cloth in an unusual fashion.

Mani and other disciples witness this in silent wonder!

The Master regains his normal mood after some time. It is time he takes his diet and he is given a little *Suji**.

He reveals a great mystery to Mani. He says: "Do you know what I saw in my trance?"

The Master's
superconscious
experiences.

In a field, extending over seven or eight miles, through which lay the way to Shihor, I saw myself walking alone, looking exactly like the sixteen-year-old Paramahansa boy of whom I had a vision in the Panchavati. A mist of joy lay all around, and out of it peered

* A sort of pudding made of powdered wheat boiled in milk.

the face of a boy of about fourteen years. Both of us were completely nude, and we played and ran in the field in great joy. After some time we felt thirsty. He drank from a tumbler and offered me the remaining water. I said, 'No, brother, I cannot take your leavings.' He laughed and washed the tumbler and brought me a fresh glass of water."

The Master is again plunged into Samadhi!

After some time he comes down to the normal plane and says to Mani, "A change is coming on me!—I may no longer take the sacramental food! The Real and the Appearance are becoming one to me!

"Do you know what I saw now? A Divine vision, the vision of the Divine Mother! She appeared with a child in the womb, which She brought forth and swallowed up the next instant. And as much of it as went into Her mouth became void! She shewed me that 'all is void'! And She said by these actions, as it were, 'Come confusion, come delusion, come!'"

This reminds Mani of a saying of the Master that the 'magician' alone is real and everything else is unreal.

Sri Ramakrishna: Well, how is it that the other time when I attracted Purna, I failed? This weakens my faith a little.

Mani: But that is working a miracle!

Sri Ramakrishna: A downright miracle!

Mani: Do you remember that day when we were returning to Dakshineswar in a carriage with you from Adhar Sen's and a bottle was broken? Some one said to you then, 'Is there any harm done? You please see to it.' And you replied, 'I care precious little for seeing to it, — that would be miracle-mongering!'

Sri Ramakrishna: Yes. Thus people lay down ailing children on the ground where men are chanting the praise of God, that they may be cured; or people cure disease through psychical powers,—all this is miracle-making. Only they whose spiritual outlook is low and narrow pray to God for the healing of disease.

III.

It is evening. Sri Ramakrishna is seated on the bed, thinking of the Mother and repeating Her blessed names. Many of the devotees are sitting in silence near him.

After some time Dr. Sircar makes his appearance in the Master's room. Sashi, Sarat, Ch. Naren, Paltu, Bhupati, and Girish are among the devotees in attendance. Sj. Ramtaran of the Star Theatre has come with Girish, to entertain the Master with his songs.

Doctor: (to the Master) Last night at three, I became very anxious for you. It began to rain and I feared your doors might have been left open.

The Master is much pleased at Doctor's solicitude for him and says, "Really?

"So long as the body exists, it must be taken care of. But I find that it is quite separate from the Self. When we can completely shake off our infatuation for Kamini-Kanchana, we clearly perceive that the body is quite separate from the Soul. When the milk of a cocoanut dries up, the kernel comes off the shell, and it rattles as you shake it. It is just like a sheathed sword; the sheath is quite separate from the sword. That is why I cannot pray to Her for the cure of my physical illness."

Perception of
body and soul as
separate entities.

Girish: (to the devotees) Pandit Sashadhar advised him to bring his mind, while in the Samadhi state, to bear on the body, in order to cure the disease. But the Master found, in one of his visions, that the body was a mere loose mass of flesh and bones.

Sri Ramakrishna: Once long ago, I was seriously ill. One day, as I was sitting within the Kali temple, I felt a desire to pray to the Mother for help. But I could not ask directly in my own name. I said, 'Mother, Hride asked me to tell you about my illness.' Before I could say more, the image of a human skeleton linked up with wire, the one I had seen in the Society, flashed into my mind. I at once said, 'Mother, only join the parts of

my body with wire links like that, that I may move about, singing Thy name and praise.'

"I should not ask for a miracle. . . ."

Ramtaran is singing :

"Lo, my Vina*, dearly beloved, sweet-tuned wreath of strings ! If you love it, you can wake the strings to sweetest melodies.

"Tune the Vina neither low nor high, and I will make sweetness flow in a hundred streams. But the string o'erslack is dumb and music dies ; and the string o'erstretched breaks, and music flies !"

He sings from 'Buddha-charita,'—

"We moan for rest, but rest can never find ; and know not whence we come nor whither float away. Again and again, we go the round of smiles and tears, and pine to know whither life doth fly away. . . .

"Burst our slumbers' bars, O Thou that art awake,—how long shall we lie tangled in Dream's meshes ? Lo ! thick lies the pall of blinding gloom, fraught with a million woes !—Rise, O dreamer ; slumber not again.

"Shine forth, O Shining One, killing the blinding dark with Thy shafts of light. Thou art our only deliverer : At Thy feet we seek our deliverance."

Listening to the song, the Master has gone into ecstasy.

Ramtaran sings again :

"Blow storm, rage and roar ! etc., etc."

When he has finished, the Master remarks,

"What is this—you serve bitters after pudding ? The moment you sang, 'Shine forth, O Shining One, kill the blinding dark with Thy shafts of light,' I saw the vision of the Sun rising, at once darkness vanished from all the world and everyone surrendered himself at His feet !"

* A stringed instrument.

Ramtaran sings again :

"O Mother, Thou art the deliverer of the meek, and the redeemer of our sins. The three Gunas abide in Thee. Thou dost create and protect and destroy in turn. Thou bindest Thyself with attributes and transcendest them as well. Yea, Thou art the all and the whole."

And again :

"Dear friend, I fear my religion is at stake. and my worship of the Mother will remain undone. The mind defies all control,—oh shame, great shame !

"I try to meditate on the Mother with Her sword in hand and garland of human heads. But it is the Dark One, with His garland of wild flowers, playing the flute with His tempting lips that shines before my eyes. I think of the Mother with Her three eyes, but I see only Him with His arch looks, and it makes me forget all !

"I try to offer flowers at the feet of the Mother, but the ravishing thought of His lissom form unsteadies me. And my meditations of the naked Mother are drawn away by the rising vision of His yellow scarf !"

This song fills the Master with rapture.

And the singing goes on :

"O Mother, who has offered all these red hybiscus flowers Thy feet ? etc., etc."

IV.

The singing has ceased. A tense atmosphere fills the room : most of the devotees are sitting absorbed in a rapturous silence. Ch. Naren is meditating, totally unconscious of the external world, blissful and calm.

Pointing him out to the Doctor, the Master says, "He is very pure. His mind is not the least stained by worldliness." The Doctor carefully observes him.

Manomohan : (smilingly to the Doctor) He says of your son that if he gets him, he does not care for the father.

Doctor : So you see! That is why I say that you become wholly involved in the 'son'.

Sri Ramakrishna : (smiling) I do not say that I do not want the father.

Doctor : Yes, I understand you.

Sri Ramakrishna : Your boy is very simple. Shambhu became red in the face as he said, 'If I sincerely pray to God, He must respond to my prayers!'

"Why do I love the boys so dearly? Because they are like unadulterated milk; a little boiling is only needed and it can then be offered to the Deity. But adulterated milk requires boiling for a long time, and a large quantity of fuel is consumed.

"The boys are like fresh earthen pots,—
 good vessels in which milk can
 be safely kept. Instruction soon
 rouses up their spiritual consciousness. But the worldly people cannot be awakened so quickly. Milk cannot be kept without suspicion in a pot which has been previously used for curd; it may turn sour.

"Your boy is still free from worldliness. He is as yet untarnished by Kamini-Kanchana."

* That is to say, forgetting God, and becoming engrossed in His Avatar or Bhakta.

Doctor: That is because he is living on his father's earnings. If he had to live by his own efforts, I could see how free he might keep himself.

Sri Ramakrishna: It may be true. But you must know that the Lord is far, far off, from worldliness. Otherwise He is within your palm!

"(To Drs. Sircar and Dokari) You are not required to renounce Kamini-Kanchna externally; you can renounce them mentally. So I said to the Goswamis, 'Why do you talk of renunciation? That will not do for you,—you have to attend to the daily worship of Shyama-sundara.'"

"But the Sannyasin must renounce externally: he must not see even the picture of a woman! To the Sannyasin, woman is verily like poison. He must stand at least ten cubits from her, or if that is not possible, at least one cubit. And he must not speak long with a woman, however, devout she may be. And he should so choose his residence that he may scarcely or never see the face of a woman!

"Money also is like poison to him. For money brings anxiety, pride, love of physical comforts and anger in its train. It inflames Rajas, and with Rajas comes Tamas. He therefore must not touch 'gold'; it leads men astray from God.

“You will look upon money only as a means of getting food, clothing and shelter, of worshipping the Deity and serving Sadhus and devotees. But it is wrong to hoard it. Bees labour hard to build their hive, but man comes and robs it.”

The duty of a householder.

Doctor: Whom to hoard for? — For a wicked son, perchance!

Sri Ramakrishna: Wicked son! Perhaps your wife is unchaste: she has her secret lover and gives him your own watch and chain!

“You need not renounce woman completely. But when one or two children have been born you should live like brother and sister.

“It is the love of Kamini-Kanchana that begets pride of learning, pride of wealth and pride of position.”

V.

Sri Ramakrishna: You cannot attain Knowledge till your egoism is destroyed. Water cannot stand on the top of a mound. But it flows in torrents into low land.

Doctor: But it is both pure and foul waters that accumulate in low land, even muddy and ditch water. But there are hollows also on mountain-tops, as in Nainital and Manasarovar, which contain only pure water of the sky.

Egoism in-
compatible with
Knowledge.

Sri Ramakrishna: Water from
the sky only—good!

Doctor: And from an elevated place water
can be distributed on all sides.

Sri Ramakrishna: (smiling) A man was
once granted a *Siddha mantram**. He went
to the top of a hill and cried out, 'Repeat
this Mantram and you will realise God.'

Doctor: Yes.

Sri Ramakrishna: But you must know
that when one's soul thirsts after God, one
forgets all difference between pure water and
ditch water. To obtain the knowledge of God,
he sometimes goes to good men, sometimes to
imperfect men. But if the Lord is gracious the
foul water cannot do him any harm. When
He grants him His knowledge, He reveals to
him what is good and what is evil.

"There may be hollows on the top of
hills, but not on that of the 'wicked ego'!
The pure water of the sky can accumulate
only when it is the enlightened ego, or the
ego of a devotee.

"True, you can distribute water on all
sides from the top of an elevated land, but
that is possible only from the hill of the
enlightened ego.

"You cannot teach man without being
ordained by God. Sankaracharya for the

* A Mantram by repeating which one is sure to attain God-
realisation.

spiritual education of mankind retained his enlightened ego even after attaining the Supreme Knowledge. But to lecture without realising Him ! What good will it do to man ?

"I went to the Nandanbagan Brahmo Samaj. After service, some one delivered a lecture from the altar. The fellow had got it written at home. And as he read, he looked about. And while he meditated, he opened his eyes from time to time !

"He who has not seen God can never impart the right instructions. If he says one thing correctly, he errs in saying the next thing !

Folly of lecturing.

Samadhyayi delivered a lecture ; he said, 'God is beyond speech and mind, and is devoid of all bliss. Do you worship Him through the joy of your love and devotion.' See how he speaks of Him who is Bliss and Joy Itself ! What good will this lecture do ? Can such things ever edify mankind ? A man once said, 'My uncle has got a cowshed full of horses.' Horses in a cow-shed ! [Laughter.] That means there was no horse at all."

Doctor : (smiling) And also no cow. [Laughter.]

By this time the devotees who were rapt in ecstasy have regained their normal consciousness. The Doctor is highly pleased with them and inquires of M. who they are. M.

introduces Paltu, Ch. Naren, Bhupati, Sarat, Sashi and other boy disciples. Of Sashi, M. says, "He is going to appear for the B.A. Examination." But the Doctor is inattentive. The Master calls his attention, saying, "Halloo listen to him."

Sri Ramakrishna : (pointing out M., to the Doctor) He instructs all the school-boys.

Doctor : Yes, I know.

Sri Ramakrishna : How wonderful ! I am quite unlettered, yet all these learned men come here ! What a wonder ! I must say it is the play of God !

It is nine at night, the night of the autumnal full moon. The Doctor came here at six, and all the while he has been sitting here, witnessing this Divine sport !

Girish : (to Doctor) I say, do you ever feel that, though you do not intend to come here, you are drawn to this place by a secret force ? Perchance I feel like that, therefore I ask you.

Doctor : No, I do not feel it. But the heart alone knows its own working. (To the Master) Besides, it is no use speaking it out.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SHYAMPUKUR HOUSE,—OCTOBER, 1885

1 P. M., Saturday, the 24th of October, 1885. The Master is sitting in his room on the first floor with Narendra, Mahimacharan, M., Doctor Sircar and other devotees. He says to Dr. Sircar, "This treatment of yours is very nice!"

Doctor: According to this system I am following, I have to consider the symptoms in the light of descriptions given in the text. It is like English music,—singing from the chart.

"Where is Girish Ghosh?—Never mind, do not trouble him; he was kept awake last night."

Sri Ramakrishna: Well, when I am in Bhava, I am overpowered by a sort of intoxication, as if I were drunk with *Siddhi*. What can it be?

Doctor: The nervous centres cease to act; hence the limbs become inert, and the legs totter. All energies rush towards the brain. Life consists in this nervous system. There is a nerve centre in the neck called Medulla Oblongata; if that is hurt, life may become extinct.

Mahimacharan speaks of *Kula-Kundalini*, the 'Serpent Power,' which lies within the Sushumna nerve. He says, "The Sushumna nerve lies within the spinal cord in a subtle and invisible form. Mahadeva has said so."

Doctor : Mahadeva examined man in his maturity. But the Europeans have studied man in all stages, from the embryonic stage to maturity.

"It is good to know Comparative History. The history of the Sonthals shows that there once lived a woman amongst them whose name was Kali: she was a valiant fighter! [All laugh.]

"Don't you laugh! Let me tell you how greatly the study of Comparative Anatomy has benefitted mankind. The distinction between the functions of the pancreatic juice and the bile was formerly unknown. But Claude Bernard examined the stomach, liver and other parts of a rabbit and proved that the bile and pancreatic juice are different in their action.

"All this shows that we must study not only man, but also the lower animals.

"The study of Comparative Religion is likewise highly beneficial. Why do his (the Master's) words go straight to our heart? Because he knows all religions—Hinduism, Mohammedanism, Christianity, Shaktism, Vaishnavism,—all these he has himself practised.

"A hive becomes perfect only when the bees gather honey from various kinds of flowers."

M.: (to Doctor) He (Mahimacharan) has made an extensive study of science.

Doctor : (smilingly) What science,—‘Max Muller’s Science of Religion’?

Mahima : (to the Master) What can the doctors do to cure you? When I learnt that you were ill, I knew it meant the pampering of the doctor’s pride.

Sri Ramakrishna : He is a very excellent doctor. He is also very learned.

Doctor Sircar folds his hands in humility.

Mahima : But here, all are equal.

The Master asks Narendra to sing. Narendra sings :

“I have made Thee the pole star of my life, I shall not lose my way any longer in this sea of life.

“Wherever I go, Thou art present. And Thou drivest away the tears of my troubled soul with Thy light serene.

“In the secret closet of my heart, the vision of Thy face ever comes before me. If it is absent even for a moment, I am overwhelmed with grief.

“Even if my mind would go astray, the vision of Thy face makes me feel ashamed.”

And :

“O Lord, Father of the universe, sitting on Thy mighty throne, Thou art enjoying the music of the worlds, as they sing the glory of Thy creation.

“Lo, born of mortal clay, I too have come to Thy door with my small voice!

“Thee I want to see, nothing else I seek. And I have come to sing a song unto Thee.

“O Lord, Thy servant’s soul yearns to sing in the same assembly where the suns and the moons sing Thy glory!”

And he sings:

“O King of kings, vouchsafe me Thy vision!

“I dedicate my life at Thy feet. But, alas, it is seared in the world’s furnace.

"My heart, alas, is deeply stained with sin. And bound in Delusion's heavy chains, lifeless I lie. O Lord, most merciful, sanctify me, grant me life by the life-giving balm of Thy gracious look!"

Sri Ramakrishna: And sing that one,—
"Thou art all that be!"

Doctor: Aha!

The Doctor is very much charmed by the music. After some time, he says to Sri Ramakrishna with folded hands, "Allow me now to take my leave; I shall come again to-morrow."

Sri Ramakrishna: Wait a little; Girish Ghosh has been sent for.

"(Pointing to Mahimacharan) He is a scholar. But he dances in the name of the Lord; he has no egotism. He came to Konna-gore, only because we went there. He is rich and independent and he has not to serve anyone.

"(Pointing to Narendra) What do you think of him!"

Doctor: Oh, he is excellent!

Sri Ramakrishna: And he?

Doctor: Ah, very nice!

Mahima: A study of philosophy, leaving aside the philosophy of the Hindus, is no study at all: Europe is ignorant of the Sankhya doctrine of the Twenty-four Principles, nor has she the capacity to grasp it.

Sri Ramakrishna: (smiling) What are the three paths you speak of?

Mahima: The Path of *Sat*, which is the path of knowledge. Next, the Path of *Chit*,—the path of Yoga,—of Karma-yoga, which necessarily subsumes all the different duties of the four Ashramas. And then the Path of *Ananda*,—the path of love and devotion. You are adept in all these three paths, and you can speak of them with authority.

Hearing this, the Master is laughing.

Dr. Sircar departs.

It is after evening and the moon has risen. The Master is standing, lost in Samadhi! Nityagopal is waiting beside him in a reverential attitude.

The Master has come down to the normal plane of consciousness and seated himself. Nityagopal is stroking his feet. And Devendra, Kalipada and many other devotees are sitting near him.

Sri Ramakrishna: My mind tells me that the present state of Nityagopal will undergo a change. His whole mind will be gathered on me; that is to say, on Him who dwells in me.

“Don’t you see Narendra, how his whole mind is being drawn towards me?”

Many of the devotees are taking leave. The Master is standing giving directions to a Bhakta about ‘Japam’. He says, “Japam is nothing but repeating His name secretly and silently. By Japam, by repeating
 What Japam is. His name with a concentrated

mind, you can have His vision, you can realise Him. Suppose a log of wood is immersed in the waters of the Ganges, fastened with an iron chain, the other end of which is fixed on the bank. Now, if you follow the chain, holding it link by link, you can gradually dive into the waters and thus trace your way along the course of the chain to the log. In the same way, if you become absorbed in the repetition of His holy name, you will eventually realise Him."

Kalipada: (smilingly to the devotees) Our Thakur is very nice! We have not to make any Japam, Dhyana or Tapasya!

The Master suddenly exclaims, "This is troubling me!"

The disease of the Master's throat is becoming aggravated. Devendra says, "This cannot hood-wink us!" He thinks the Master is only feigning illness to the devotees.

The devotees depart. Some of the boy disciples will attend on the Master at night. M. also will remain.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE COSSIPORE GARDEN,—DECEMBER, 1885

I.

The Master is staying in the Cossipore Garden. His illness has taken a serious turn. But he is ever thinking of the welfare of his disciples. It is always one or another of them that is engaging his solicitious thoughts.

It is evening of Wednesday, the 23rd of December, 1885. Twelve days ago, on Friday the 11th of December, the Master removed from the Shyampukur house to the present place. The boy disciples have begun, one by one, to remain permanently in the garden to nurse the Master, though some of them have still to come from their homes. The householder disciples come here to see him almost every day and sometimes spend the night.

Nearly all the disciples have by this time come to know the Master. It was in 1881 that the first group of disciples came. By the end of 1884, Sarat and Sashi became known to the Master, and after their college examination in the middle of 1885, they have been frequently visiting him. The first meeting of Girish with the Master occurred at the Star Theatre, in September, 1884. Since the beginning of the following December he has been

regularly visiting Sri Ramakrishna. And it was during the latter part of December of the same year that Sarada first came in contact with the Master in the Dakshineswar Temple. Subodh and Kshirode joined him in August, 1885.

This morning there was a wondrous manifestation of the Master's love. He said to Niranjan, "Thou art my father; I shall sit on thy lap." He touched Kalipada over the heart and said, "Awake!" and affectionately stroked his chin, saying, "Whoever has sincerely prayed to God, or done his daily worship, must come here!" Two lady devotees also received his blessing: he fell into Samadhi and touched their heart with his feet and they burst into tears of joy. His love veritably overflowed to-day! He wanted to bless Gopal of Sinti and said, "Call him to me."

It is evening. The Master is thinking of the Divine Mother. A while after he speaks with a few devotees; but his voice is very low. Kali, Chunilal, M., Navagopal, Sashi and Niranjan are in attendance.

Sri Ramakrishna: (to M.) Buy a stool for this place. What will it cost?

M.: Between two and three rupees.

Sri Ramakrishna: If a small seat costs twelve annas why should a stool cost so much?

M.: It will not cost much.

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Sri Ramakrishna: To-morrow is Thursday, inauspicious during the last hours of the day-time. Can you not come here before three?

M.: Yes, sir, I shall.

Sri Ramakrishna: Well, how long will it take to cure this disease?

M.: The case is somewhat aggravated. It will take some days.

Sri Ramakrishna: How many?

M.: About six months.

The Master becomes very excited on hearing this. He says, "What do you say?"

M.: I mean, to cure *completely*.

Sri Ramakrishna: Say that! Well, how is it that in spite of all these divine visions, ecstasy and Samadhi, I still suffer from disease?

M.: Your suffering is no doubt great, but it has a deep meaning.

Sri Ramakrishna: What is it?

M.: A change will come over you,—your mind is inclining towards the formless aspect of God; even your illumined ego is vanishing.

Sri Ramakrishna: Yes, my preaching is coming to an end,—I cannot teach any more. I see everything is Rama Himself! And sometimes I think, 'Whom shall I teach?'

"You see, it is because this house has been engaged that various kinds of devotees are coming here. I cannot have a sign-board put

The meaning of
the Master's
illness.

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up, like Sashadhar or Krishna Prasanna Sen, to say that 'a lecture will be delivered at such and such an hour!'" [The Master and M. laugh.]

M.: There is yet another purpose, the choice of disciples. The devotees have achieved in these few days what they could not have done by five years' *tapasya*—they have achieved Sadhana, love and devotion.

Sri Ramakrishna: Yes, that is all right. But Niranjan went home!

"(To Niranjan) Tell me how you feel."

Niranjan: Formerly I loved you, no doubt, but now it is impossible to live without you!

M.: I once saw how great they are.

Sri Ramakrishna: Where?

M.: I stood in a corner of the Shyampukur house and said to myself: 'They have made their way here through innumerable barriers, and given themselves over to your service.'

These words fill the Master with ecstasy and he loses himself in Samadhi. When he regains his normal mood, he says to M., "I saw that everything was passing from *Sakara* to *Nirakara*! I wish I could tell you the other things, but I cannot!

"Well, this tendency of mine towards 'Nirakara' is only an indication of my nearing dissolution, is it not?"

M.: (wonderingly) It may be so!

Sri Ramakrishna: Even now I see that the Nirakara Akhanda Sachchidananda is posing

in this way! . . . I have suppressed my emotions with a great effort!

“The choice of disciples which you spoke of is true. Now that I am ill, I can understand who are Antaranga and who are Bahiranga. Those who are living here, renouncing the world, are my Antaranga. And those who pay only occasional visits, to make formal inquiries about me, are Bahiranga. Did you not note Bhavanath? He came to Shyampukur dressed like a bridegroom and asked me how I was doing, and he did not come any more.”

II.

Sri Ramakrishna: (to Mani) When the Lord incarnates Himself for the sake of His devotees many devotees also come with Him. Some of them are Antaranga, some are Bahiranga and others are *Rasad-dars* *.

“I realised this state for the first time when I was ten or eleven years old, as I was once going through a field on my way to the shrine of Bishalakshi. What a vision it was! I at once lost my external consciousness.

“When I was about twenty-three years old, the Divine Mother asked me in the Kali temple, ‘Dost thou want to be *Akshara*?’ I did not know the meaning of *Akshara*! I asked Haladhari. He said, ‘*Kshara* means Jiva and *Akshara* means Paramatman.’

* *Rasad-dar*=A commissary.

“At the time of the evening service of the Temple, I would go to the terrace of the ‘Kuthi’ and cry out, ‘O devotees, where are you? Come to me soon! I am dying in the company of the worldly-minded!’

The Master on himself.

“When I told all this to the ‘Englishmen’, they said it was mere hallucination. I believed them and consoled myself. But now it is all coming true! The devotees have all come!”

“She also gave me a vision of the five Rasad-dars. First, Sejo Babu appeared. Next, Shambhu Mallik,—I had never seen him before; but I had had a vision in which I saw a fair-complexioned man with a cap on his head. When, long after, I met him for the first time, I remembered that it was he whom I had previously seen in my vision. I have not yet identified the other three. But they were all fair-complexioned. I think Surendra is something of a Rasad-dar.

“When I realised this state†, a being, looking exactly like myself, came and thoroughly shook my *Ida*, *Pingala* and *Sushumna* nerves. He licked the ‘lotuses’ of the six ‘centres’ with his tongue, and the drooping lotuses at once turned their faces upwards!

* The Master here refers to a revelation he had after the completion of his Sadhana, in which the Divine Mother assured him that many pure-hearted devotees would come to him and he would not have to suffer the painful company of the worldly-minded.

† The state of God-consciousness, realised during the Sadhana period of his life,

And at last the *Sahasrara* 'lotus' became full-bloomed ! *

"She would reveal to me the sort of men that would come. I saw with *these* eyes,—not in a superconscious vision—the Kirtan procession of Chaitanya-deva going from the *Bat-tala* towards the *Vakul-tala*. And in the congregation I saw Balaram and also, I think, you

"I saw Sashi and Sarat amongst the followers of Rishi Krishna (Christ).

"I had the vision of a boy in the Bat-tala. Hride said, 'Then a son will be born to you.' I said, 'How can that be? To me every woman is Mother!' That boy is Rakhal!

"I said to Mother, 'Mother, if thou hast placed me in this condition, then send a rich man to me.' That is why Sejo Babu served me for fourteen long years. And in how many different ways! He made a separate storehouse for the service of the Sadhus. Carriage, palanquin, and whatever I asked him to give to any one, he gave! The Brahmani used to identify him as Pratap Rudra. †

"Bijoy had a vision of this form ‡. How do you account for it? Bijoy said to me, 'I

* For 'lotuses' and 'six centres,' vide *Raja Yoga* by Swami Vivekananda.

† The Brahmani was the spiritual preceptor of the Master, Raja Pratap Rudra, king of Orissa. was a most devoted follower of Sri Chaitanya and served him with the utmost care and faithfulness.

‡ That of the Master.

touched your form in the vision exactly as I can touch you.'

"Noto * counted thirty-one disciples in all. That is not much! But then Bijoy and Kedar also are making some more.

"I was shown in a vision that I would have to live my last days on pudding. During my present illness, my wife was one day feeding me with pudding. I burst into tears and said, 'Is this living on pudding,—so painfully—near the end?'"

* Noto or Latu, afterwards known as Swami Adbhutapanda.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE COSSIPORE GARDEN,—JANUARY, 1886

I.

The Master is sitting in his room in the Cossipore Garden, talking with Mani about Sj. Ram Chatterjee, who came from the Dakshineswar Temple to see him.

It is 4 P. M., Monday, the 4th of January, 1886, corresponding to the fourteenth day of the dark half of the month of Pausa.

Narendra enters and sits down. The Master looks at him from time to time and smiles affectionately. He hints to Mani that Narendra has been crying. After a while, he hints again that Narendra came crying all the way from home.

After some time Narendra breaks silence, saying, "I am thinking of going there to-day."

Sri Ramakrishna: Where?

Narendra: To the Bel-tala at Dakshineswar, I will light a fire there at night.

Sri Ramakrishna: No, they* will not allow you. The Panchavati is a favourable place,—many Sadhus have made Japam and Dhyana there—but very cold and dark.

Again there is silence, till the Master says to Narendra! "Won't you continue your studies?"

* The authorities of the Magazine.

Narendra : (to Master and Mani) I am saved even if I get a medicine to make me forget all that I have already learnt!

Budo Gopal who has been sitting there, says, "I will accompany him."

A box of grapes has been lying beside the Master, — an offering from Kalipada. The Master gives a few to Narendra and divides the rest among the other devotees.

II.

It is evening. Narendra is sitting downstairs, smoking a hookah and speaking out the agonies of his heart to Mani.

Narendra : Last Saturday, as I was meditating here, I felt a peculiar sensation in my heart.

Mani : It was the awakening of the Kundalini.

Narendra : May be. I clearly perceived the *Ida* and the *Pingala* nerves. I asked Hazra to feel my heart.

"I saw him [the Master] upstairs yesterday and told him everything. I said, 'Every one has been satisfied; give me some realisations!—Why should I alone go unblest?'"

Mani : What did he say to it?

Narendra : He said, 'Settle your home affairs and come to me: you shall have everything—What do you want?' I replied, 'I want to remain immersed in Samadhi for three

or four days at a time only occasionally coming down to eat a little.' He replied, 'You are very low-minded! There is a higher state yet than that! Don't you sing, "Thou art all that be"'?

Mani: Yes, he often affirms that, after coming down from Samadhi, man finds that it is He who has become Jiva, Jagat and all this. He says that the Jiva-koti can, at the most, realise Samadhi, but cannot come down from it.

Narendra: He advised me, 'Have done with the home troubles,—you shall realise a still higher state than Samadhi!'

"I went home this morning. They all began to rebuke me saying, 'What is this, you are wandering like a vagabond? The Law Examination is drawing near, and you are not making any preparations,—what is this vagrancy?'"

Mani: Did your mother say anything?

Narendra: No, she was anxious to feed me. And, though I did not want it, I had to partake a little of venison.

Mani: Next?

Narendra: I then went to my study at my grandmother's. But when I tried to read, a great fear seized me, as if reading was a terror! My heart struggled within me, and I wept as I had never wept before.

"Then away from the books I ran,—I ran along the streets, and I did not know where my

shoes slipped from my feet! I ran by a straw-rick and was covered with straw; but I didn't care and ran along towards Cossipore."

Narendra pauses for a time. He then says, "The reading of *Viveka-Chudamani** has made me still more restless. Sankaracharya says that these three things can be acquired only through great Tapasya and good fortune: human birth, desire for Liberation and refuge with a man of realisation. I thought that surely I have gained all these three. Through great Tapasya, I have been born as man; through great Tapasya, I have learnt to be eager for Mukti; and through great Tapasya, I have secured the company of such a great soul!"

Mani: Ah fine words!

Narendra: I have no taste for the world. Everyone living in the world, excepting a few devotees, appears repulsive to me.

He is silent again. An intense Vairagya is consuming his heart, and it is yearning and panting for the vision of the Lord.

Narendra breaks the silence: "You have found Peace, but my soul knows no rest! You are blessed indeed!"

But Mani makes no reply; for he remembers the words of the Master,—a man must pine and pant for God like this, before he can see Him!

* 'The Crest Jewel of Discrimination,' a work of Sankaracharya.

In the evening Mani goes upstairs and finds the Master asleep.

The Master wakes up at about nine. Niranjan and Sashi are waiting upon him. He is again and again speaking of Narendra.

Sri Ramakrishna : How wonderful is the state of Narendra. This very Narendra would not believe in God with form. But see how his soul is struggling now! You know that story of the man who asked his Guru how he could attain God. The Guru said, 'Come along, I will show you how you can realise Him,' and led him to a tank and plunged him under the water. After a short time, he released him and asked, 'How did you feel?' The disciple replied, 'I was dying for a breath of air.'

"When your heart pines and pants for God, know that you will presently see him. The rosy hues of the dawn herald the approaching sunrise.

The Master's illness has grown worse to-day. But his mind has no thought for the ailing body; it is engaged in thinking of Narendra!

Narendra has gone away to Dakshineswar, accompanied by a few devotees. It is the last night of the dark half of the month,—*Amavasya*—and extremely dark.

Mani spends the night in the Garden and dreams that he is sitting within an assembly of Sannyasins!

III.

4 P.M., Tuesday, the 5th of January. The Master is sitting on his bed, talking alone to Mani.

Sri Ramakrishna: If Kshirode goes to Gangasagar, buy him a blanket.

Mani: Yes, sir, I shall.

After a short silence, the Master speaks again: "Well, what has happened to the boys? Some are flying to Puri, others to Gangasagar!

"They are all renouncing their homes! Narendra has also done it. Indeed, when a man conceives an intense dispassion for the world, it appears to him as a veritable well and his relations as venomous serpents!"

Mani: Yes, sir, life in the world is full of suffering.

Sri Ramakrishna: The sufferings of hell! and that from the very moment of birth! Don't you see what a trouble wife and children are?

Mani: Quite true, sir. And you said that they* have no liabilities to bind them to the world.

Sri Ramakrishna: Don't you see how Niranjan is? 'Here, take what is thine, give me what is mine,'—that's all; there is no more connection with the world—nothing to pull from behind!

* Those who have not entered the world.

“Kamini-Kanchana truly is the world! Haven't you seen the moment you have money, you want to secure it by a knot?”

On hearing this, Mani bursts into laughter. The Master also laughs.

Mani: And it requires a good deal of calculation before money can be brought out! [Laughter.] But you said at Dakshineswar that if any one lives in the world, after having transcended the three Gunas, he may be safe.

Sri Ramakrishna: Yes, like a child.

Mani: Yes, sir; but it is very difficult to live like that; it requires tremendous power.

The Master is silent.

Mani: They went last night to meditate at Dakshineswar. I dreamt a dream.

Sri Ramakrishna: What did you dream?

Mani: I dreamt that Narendra and others had become Sannyasins, and were sitting before a fire. I was also sitting amongst them. They were smoking a hookah and blowing out smoke through their mouth; I said that it smelled like hemp.

Sri Ramakrishna: Mental renunciation is the essential thing; one having it is also a Sannyasin.

After a short silence, the Master says,—
“But one must set fire to one's desires first!”

Mani: You said to the Pandit of the Burrabazar Marwaris that you still have the

desire for Bhakti. This, then, is not to be counted among 'desires'?

Sri Ramakrishna : No, just as *Hinche* greens are not to be counted among pot-herbs*, because they are antibilious.

"Well, all my joy and ecstasy, where are they gone?"

Mani : You seem to be living now in that state which the Gita describes as beyond the three Gunas. These Gunas, Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas are fulfilling their functions, but you are not affected by them, not even by Sattwa Guna.

Sri Ramakrishna : Yes, I am placed in the condition of a child. Well, do you think the body will not survive this time?

The Master and Mani are sitting silent. Narendra comes in to take leave. He will go to his home to settle its affairs. Since the death of his father, his mother and brothers have been passing very hard days, sometimes even going without food. He is their sole hope and support. But his heart is a fire with intense Vairagyam: he could not appear for the Law Examination. A friend has promised a loan of a hundred rupees with which he hopes to make some provision for his family.

Narendra : I am going home. (To Mani) I shall stop at Mahim Chakravarti's; will you go there?

* Pot-herbs generally excite the bilious humour of the body.

Mani is unwilling. The Master looks at him and asks Narendra, "Why?"

Narendra: I am going that way, so I shall stop there to have a chat with him.

The Master gazes at him.

Narendra: A friend here has promised me a loan of Rs. 100. I hope to make therewith three months' provision for our home.

The Master is silent. He looks at Mani.

Mani: (to Narendra) No, you go. I shall go afterwards.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE COSSIPORE GARDEN, MARCH,—1886

It is eight at night on Thursday, the 11th of March, 1886. The Master is lying on his bed in his room in the Cossipore Garden. Narendra, Sashi, M., Budo Gopal and Sarat are in attendance. Sarat is standing beside his bed, fanning him.

The Master speaks about his illness. He says, "If some of you go to Bholanath, he can give you an oil with directions how to apply it."

Budo Gopal: We shall fetch it to-morrow morning.

M.: Some one can go and get it to-day.

Sashi: I can.

Sri Ramakrishna: (pointing to Sarat) He may go.

After a while Sarat leaves for the Dakshineswar Temple to get the oil from S^j. Bholanath Mukherjee, who is employed there.

The Master is still lying down. The disciples are waiting in silence. All on a sudden he sits up and addresses himself to Narendra.

Sri Ramakrishna: Brahman is 'alepa*'. The three Gunas inhere in Him, but He Himself is unaffected by them, just as air contains both fair and foul odours, but is itself unaffected by them.

* 'Alepa,' an epithet applied to Brahman, meaning *untainted*.

"Sankaracharya was going along a street in Benares, when a 'Chandala' Jnana. passing with a load of flesh, happened to touch him. He exclaimed, 'What, thou touchest me!' The Chandala replied, 'Neither have you touched me, nor have I touched you. The Atman is above all contamination, and you are that Pure Atman!'

"Of Brahman and Maya, the Jnani rejects the latter. Maya is like unto a veil. Just see how I put this kerchief between you and the lamp; you no longer see the light of the lamp!"

The Master holds the kerchief between himself and the disciples and says, "Now you see my face no more: as has been sung by Ramprasad, 'Raise the curtain and behold—!'

"The Bhakta, however, does not ignore Maya. He worships Mahamaya.

Bhakti. He surrenders himself to Her and prays, 'O Mother, stand aside from my path; only then can I hope to realise Brahman.'

"The Jnani denies all the three states, waking, dream and deep sleep. The Bhakta accepts them all;—so long as the ego exists, everything else also exists. So long as his ego remains, the Bhakta sees that it is He who has become everything,—Maya, Jiva, Jagat and the Twenty-four Principles*."

* The Twenty-four Principles, according to the Sankhya philosophy, are Prakriti, Mahat, Ahankara, the five Tanmatras, the five Karmendriyas (organs of action), the five Jnanendriyas (organs of perception), Manas, and the five Mahabhutas.

The disciples are silently listening.

Sri Ramakrishna: 'Maya-vada' is dry.—
Repeat what I said.

Narendra: 'Dry.'

The Master strokes the face and hands of Narendra and observes, "These are all signs of a Bhakta. The Jnani has quite different signs,—his features are dry.

"The Jnani retains the Vidya-maya, that
Vijnana.
is to say, devotion, kindness,
dispassion, etc., even after the
attainment of Knowledge. It has two ends; first, the teaching of mankind, and secondly, the enjoyment of Divine Bliss. If the Jnani remains immersed in the silence of Samadhi, he cannot teach men. Hence it is that Sankaracharya retained the ego of Knowledge.

"And he lives as a devotee in the company of devotees, enjoying and drinking deep the Bliss of God.

"No fault attaches to this 'ego of Knowledge' or 'the ego of the devotee.' It is the 'wicked I' that is harmful. When a man realises God, his nature becomes like a child's; and the 'ego of a child' is quite harmless, even as the reflection of a face on a mirror cannot hurt any one!

"A burnt rope is a rope only in appearance; it is scattered at a slight puff. The Fire of Knowledge has burnt the ego, therefore it

can no more injure any one; it is 'ego' in name only!

"To realise the Absolute and then to live on the Relative plane,—like crossing the river and coming back again,—is for the spiritual education of men and for enjoyment—for play!"

The Master is speaking in a very low tone. He pauses a little, and then resumes:

"The body is so ill,—but the mind is free from Avidya-maya! Let me tell you, my mind thinks not in the least of Ramlal, home or wife. Instead, I am anxious for a Kayastha boy, Purna!—I am not in the least anxious for them!

"She it is who has allowed me to retain my Vidya-maya for the good of men and devotees. But to retain the Vidya-maya means reincarnation. The Avataras keep it, and so long as even the slightest desire remains, one has to be born again and again. When all desires are eradicated, one attains Mukti. But the Bhaktas never aspire to it.

"If any one dies in Benares, he attains Liberation and has not to be born again.

"The goal of the Jnanis is Liberation."

Narendra: The other day we went to the house of Mahim Chakravarty.

Sri Ramakrishna: (smilingly) Yes.

Narendra: I never before met such a dry philosopher as he!

Sri Ramakrishna: (smiling) What was the matter?

Narendra: He requested us to sing. Gangadhar sang: 'When she revived on hearing the name of *Shyama*, she looked about; and her eyes fell on a 'Tamala' tree which stood near by.' On hearing the song, he said, 'Why all these songs? I do not like 'love' and all that. Besides we are living with wife and children: why all these songs here?'

Sri Ramakrishna: (to M.) Do you see his fear?

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE COSSIPORE GARDEN,—APRIL, 1886

It is past five in the evening of Friday, the 9th of April, 1886. Narendra, Kali, Niranjan and M. are talking downstairs in the Cossipore Garden house.

Niranjan: (to M.) Is it true that Vidyasagar is opening a new school? Why not secure an employment for Narendra there?

Narendra: I have had enough of service under Vidyasagar.

Narendra has only lately returned from Bodh Gaya. There he visited the image of Buddha and plunged into deep meditation before Him. And he also visited the Bo-tree, which has grown out of the one under which Lord Buddha attained Nirvana.

Kali says, "One day, at Gaya, Narendra sang many songs at Umesh Babu's to the accompaniment of *mridanga*."

It is now a little late in the night. Sri Ramakrishna is sitting on his bed and Mani is fanning him. Latu comes in.

Sri Ramakrishna: (to Mani) Bring a piece of *chadar* * and a pair of slippers.

Mani: Yes, sir.

Sri Ramakrishna: (to Latu) A *chadar* costs ten annas, and slippers,—what is the total cost?

Latu: One rupee ten annas.

The Master hints to Mani to note the price.

* Cloth used as an upper garment.

Narendra comes in and sits down, and also Sashi, Rakhal and other disciples. The Master asks Narendra to stroke his feet. He then asks him by signs if he has taken his meal.

The Master on *Sri Ramakrishna* : (smilingly to M.) He went there*.

M. : (to Narendra) What are the doctrines of Buddha?

Narendra : He could not express what he realised by his Tapasya. And hence people call him an atheist.

Sri Ramakrishna : (by signs) Why atheist? He was no atheist—he could not make known his realisations. Do you know what ‘Buddha’ means?—To become one with ‘Bodha,’ Supreme Intelligence, through deep meditation—to become Pure Intelligence Itself.

Narendra : Yes, sir. There are three classes of them,—Buddha, Arhat, and Bodhisattva.

Sri Ramakrishna : This is also His play!—A new ‘Lila’! Why should he be an atheist? The state of Self-realisation is something between *Asti* and *Nasti*,—‘being’ and ‘non-being.’

Narendra : (to M.) It is a state in which contradictions meet. The same Self-realisation. hydrogen and oxygen, which produce cold water, also make the oxy-hydrogen blow-pipe.

“In that state, work and renunciation of work, that is to say, selfless work becomes possible. The worldly ones, who are engrossed

* To Bodh Gaya.

in sense-objects, say, 'Everything *exists*.' But the Maya-vadins say, '*Nasti*,—nothing exists.' The state of Buddhahood is beyond both 'being' and 'non-being.'"

Sri Ramakrishna: These, 'being' and 'non-being,' are modifications of Prakriti. The Reality transcends them both.

The disciples are sitting in silence. The Master asks Narendra presently, "What was his creed?"

Narendra: Buddha never said anything about the existence or non-existence of God. His principal theme was Compassion. A hawk was about to devour its prey. Buddha gave it his own flesh to save the life of the suffering creature.

"What an intense dispassion! A Prince,—yet he renounced everything! Those who possess nothing, who have no riches or fortune, what do they renounce?"

"When he returned home, after the realisation of Nirvana, he besought his wife and son and many princes of the royal household to take to the life of renunciation. What Vairagya! But contrast with this the conduct of Vyasadeva,—he forbade his son Sukadeva to give up the world, saying 'My son, practise religion as a householder!'"

"He never cared for Shakti* or Bhakti. He sought only Nirvana!"

*Shakti = power.

“Ah, what tremendous dispassion! He sat under the tree in Tapasya and said, ‘Let my body die and decay, if here I do not attain Nirvana!’ Such a firm resolve!

“This body, indeed, is the great enemy! There is no hope till this is quelled!”

Sashi: Then how do you say that meat-eating is conducive to Sattwa Guna? Don’t you say that one should take meat?

Narendra: If I eat meat, I can also live on simple rice—mere rice; even without salt!

After some time, the Master asks Narendra by signs whether Buddha has a tuft of hair on his head.

Narendra: No, sir, his head is covered as it were with a cluster of *rudraksha* beads.

Sri Ramakrishna: And his eyes?

Narendra: They are as in the Samadhi state.

The Master relapses into silence. The disciples are all looking at him intently. A smile suddenly illumines the face of the Master as he begins to talk to Narendra. Mani is fanning him.

Sri Ramakrishna: Well, here you have got everything—what do you say?—even pulse and tamarind!

Narendra: After experiencing all the states of spirituality, you are now living on a lower plane.

Mani: (aside) After realising all spiritual ideals, he is living as a Bhakta.

Sri Ramakrishna: Some one seems to have held me to a lower plane!

The Master takes the fan from Mani's hand and says, "Just as I see this fan *directly before* me, in exactly the same way have I seen God! And I have seen—": he makes a sign by placing his hand on his heart and says, "Tell me what I said."

Narendra: I understand.

Sri Ramakrishna: Tell me.

Narendra: I could not hear you clearly.

The Master again makes a sign to indicate that he has realised that He and the Self within him are identical.

Narendra: Yes, yes, *Soham*—"I am He!"

Sri Ramakrishna: Only a 'line' intervenes,—for the enjoyment of bliss.

Narendra: (to M.) The Great Ones remain in the world, even after achieving their own Liberation, retaining the ego, suffering the weals and woes of the body, that they may grant salvation to mankind.

"It is like the coolie work which we have to perform under compulsion; but the Great Ones do it of their own will."

There is complete silence again. The Master says, after sometime, "The roof is quite within view, but it is very difficult to reach it."

Narendra: Yes, sir.

Sri Ramakrishna: But if some one has already reached it, he can throw down a rope and draw another up to the roof.

"A Sadhu from Hrishikesh said to me, 'How wonderful! I find all the five kinds of Samadhi manifest in you!'

"Sometimes 'like a monkey';—just as a monkey jumps up from branch to branch, even so the 'Great Energy' (*Maha Vayu*) jumps up (from the lower to the higher plane) in the body, and the mind is plunged into Samadhi.

"Sometimes 'like a fish';—just as a fish moves about in water in great joy, even so the 'Great Energy' moves upwards in the body, and the mind goes into Samadhi.

"Sometimes 'like a bird';—the 'Great Energy' moves about in the body like bird flying from branch to branch.

"Sometimes 'like an ant';—the 'Great Energy' creeps slowly up like an ant, till it reaches the Sahasrara, and the mind is then lost in Samadhi.

"Sometimes 'like a reptile';—that is to say, the course of the 'Great Energy' is zig-zag like a snake's; when it reaches the Sahasrara, the mind is plunged into Samadhi."

Rakhal: Let us stop here. There has been enough of talk already,—it will aggravate his illness.



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